SPARTACUS: ROME'S REBEL GLADIATOR

BESS OF HARDWICK: TUDOR SOCIAL CLIMBER

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THE ROARING TWENTIES

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BECOMING FRIDA KAHLO

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WELCOME MARCH 2023

This month's Essential Guide explores the vast social and cultural changes of the so-called 'Roaring Twenties' – discover more from page 27

The term 'Roaring Twenties' is one that more often than not conjures up images of Charleston dances and new fashions; a decade of fun and frivolity that followed the horrors of World War I. But is this the full story? **In this month's Essential Guide, we've enlisted the help of Professor Sarah Churchwell, who helps us dig deeper into life in the 1920s on both sides of the Atlantic** – from the music and creativity of the Harlem Renaissance and new freedoms for women, to racial tensions, economic uncertainty and the impact of prohibition. Turn to page 27 to get started.

Elsewhere, we explore the remarkable career of **Frida Kahlo, the celebrated Mexican painter who channelled her pain and passion into creating incredible works of art** (*page 52*). We also take a look at images of 19th and early 20th-century zoos (*page 58*), **examine what impact the Schlieffen Plan might have had on World War I had it been successful** (*page 64*), and share some fascinating facts about London's history (*page 24*).

Plus, we'll also be delving into the life of Tudor social climber Bess of Hardwick (*page 20*), and exploring the story behind the Servile Wars, that last of which saw a **rebel gladiator named Spartacus pit his slave army against the might of Rome** (*page 18*).

See you next month!

Charlotte Hodgman
Editor

THIS MONTH'S BIG NUMBERS

90,000
The estimated peak strength of Spartacus's slave army during the Third Servile War

£60,000
The annual income (around £20m today) inherited by Bess of Hardwick in 1565

6,000
The number of cards and letters that made up the world's first official airmail delivery in 1911

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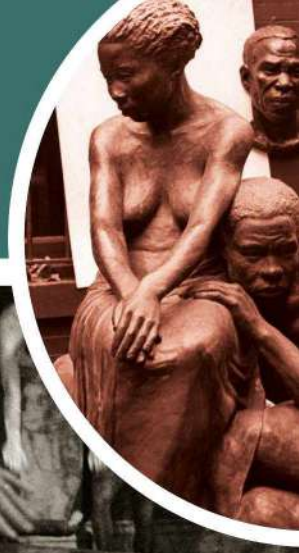

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THE ROARING TWENTIES

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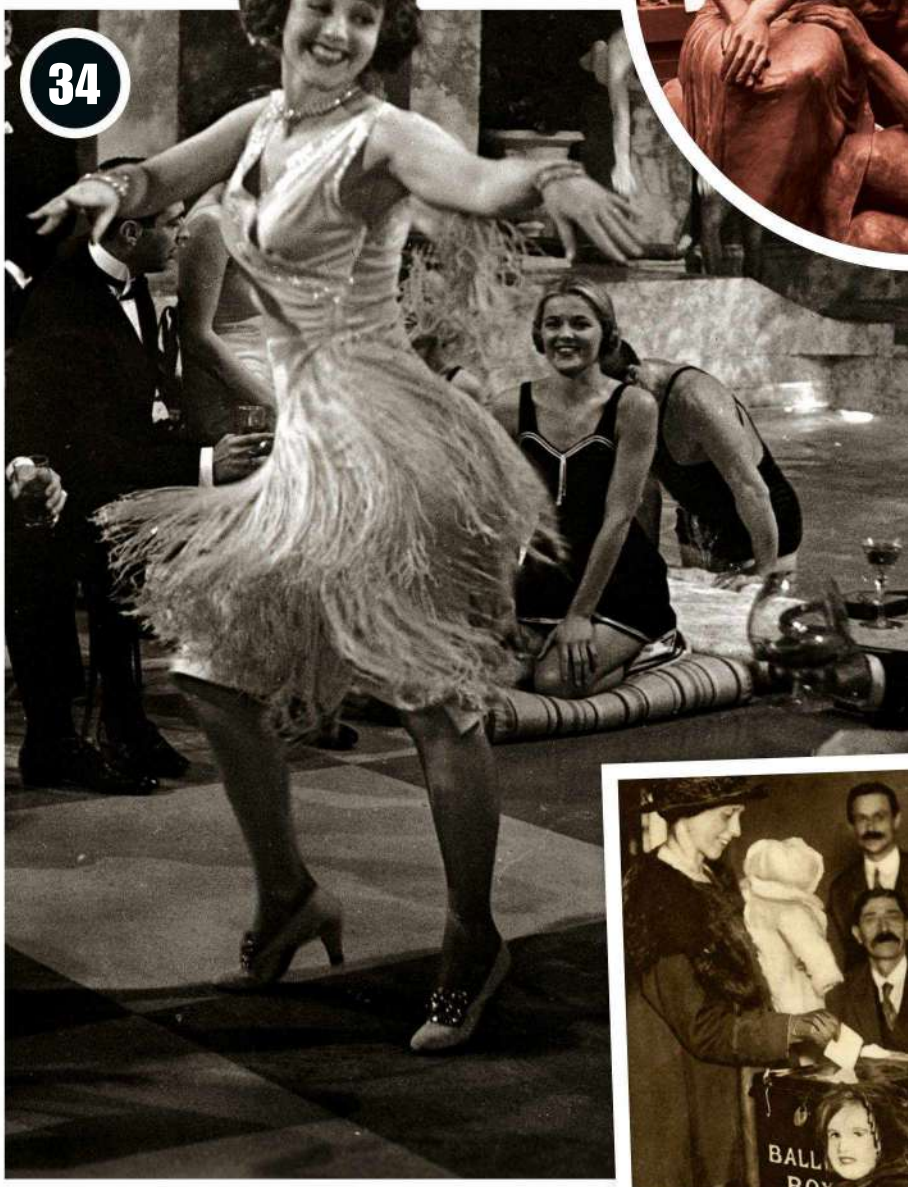

▲ Did the 1920s genuinely 'roar' for everyone, or is it a lazy myth that needs to be forgotten?

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▲ Why prohibition fuelled the rise of organised crime

▲ Discover how new tech transformed 1920s cinema

▲ Was the 1920s a decade of progress for women?

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SNAPSHOTS

1868
BET ON IT

The traditional Chinese guessing game of fan-tan is first believed to have emerged more than 2,000 years ago, with generations of players gambling their cash on outcomes determined purely by chance. The most devoted players (like the gentlemen shown here) were found in the city of Guangzhou and the wider Pearl River Delta region, with migrants taking the game with them when they built new lives overseas. One US city in which the game became popular was San Francisco, with its Chinatown district boasting dozens of fan-tan houses by the second half of the 19th century. However, growing anti-Chinese prejudice in California – combined with stereotypical associations of fan-tan with degeneracy and vice – would lead the state to ban the game in 1885.

GETTY IMAGES

SNAPSHOTS

1990
LEVY EN MASSE

Following their victory in the 1987 general election, Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government decided to push ahead with their plans to introduce the Community Charge, commonly known as the 'poll tax', requiring all adults to pay a fixed rate set by their local authority. However, the proposed system was wildly unpopular, inciting demonstrations across Britain in the months before it was implemented. On 31 March 1990, a poll tax protest in central London descended into chaos, with mounted police forcing people from Whitehall into Trafalgar Square, which was already overcrowded. Violent clashes between police and demonstrators ensued, with a massive clean-up operation also required once the protest was over – as evident from this photograph. After Thatcher's fall from power, her successor, John Major, acknowledged the public mood and repealed the poll tax, replacing it with Council Tax in 1993.

GETTY IMAGES

Parliament Square
Piccadilly Circus

SNAPSHOTS

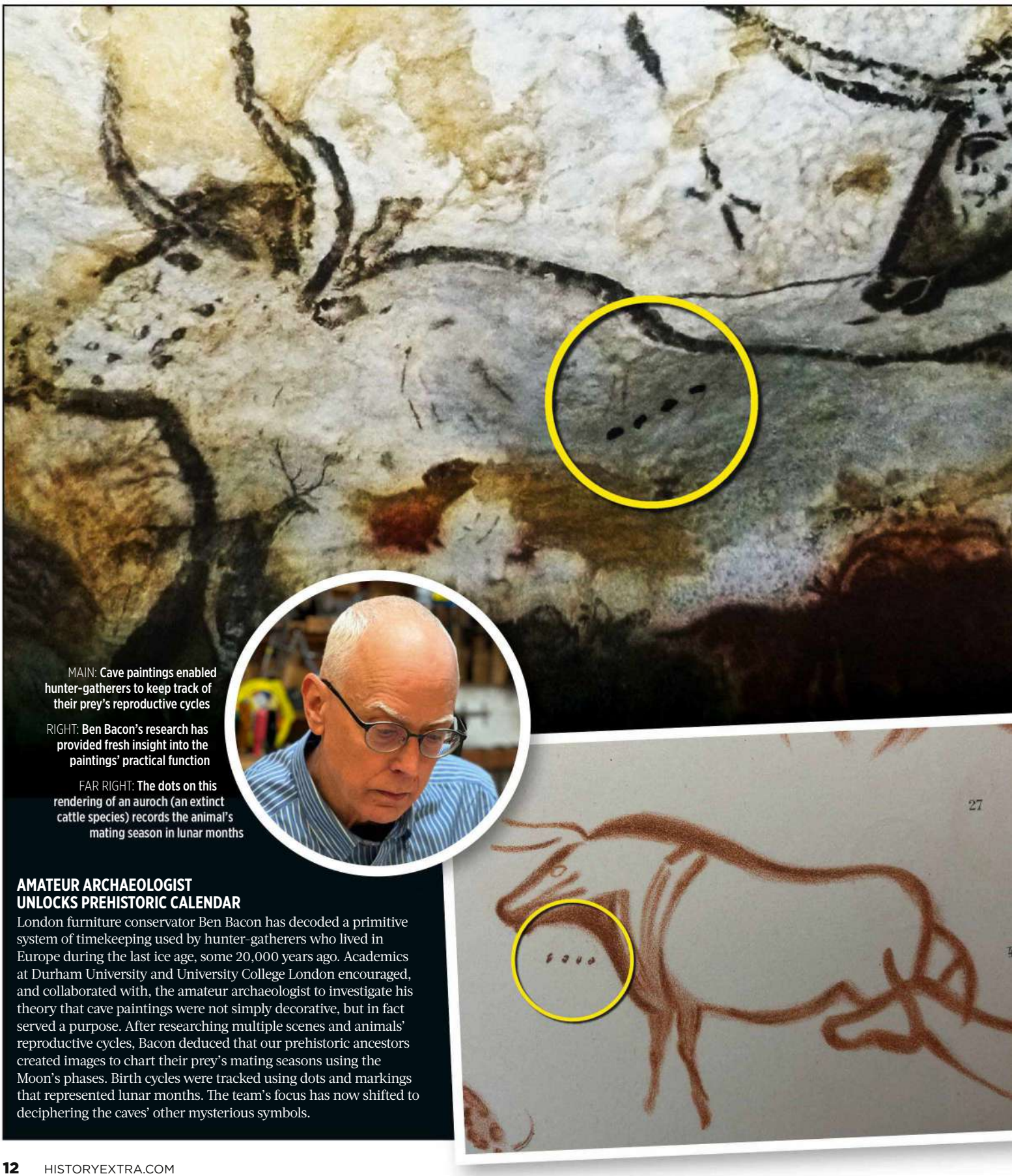
1898
PUFFED UP

For centuries, Atlantic puffins have been a source of sustenance for the people of Iceland and the Faroe Islands. The traditional method of catching the birds involves the use of a long, lacrosse stick-like device known as a *fleygastong* (as seen in this photograph of a Faroese hunting party), which enables hunters to scoop the puffins out of the air and bring them down to the ground. Once they have been slaughtered, the birds are then eaten fresh, smoked or salted in brine, with their feathers and down used to make bedding. In the past, the most experienced hunters could catch upwards of around 300 birds a day, but modern concerns regarding puffin sustainability have led to tighter hunting regulations across the North Atlantic.

ALAMY

THINGS WE LEARNED THIS MONTH...

RECENT HISTORY HEADLINES THAT CAUGHT OUR EYE



MAIN: **Cave paintings enabled hunter-gatherers to keep track of their prey's reproductive cycles**

RIGHT: **Ben Bacon's research has provided fresh insight into the paintings' practical function**

FAR RIGHT: **The dots on this rendering of an auroch (an extinct cattle species) records the animal's mating season in lunar months**

AMATEUR ARCHAEOLOGIST UNLOCKS PREHISTORIC CALENDAR

London furniture conservator Ben Bacon has decoded a primitive system of timekeeping used by hunter-gatherers who lived in Europe during the last ice age, some 20,000 years ago. Academics at Durham University and University College London encouraged, and collaborated with, the amateur archaeologist to investigate his theory that cave paintings were not simply decorative, but in fact served a purpose. After researching multiple scenes and animals' reproductive cycles, Bacon deduced that our prehistoric ancestors created images to chart their prey's mating seasons using the Moon's phases. Birth cycles were tracked using dots and markings that represented lunar months. The team's focus has now shifted to deciphering the caves' other mysterious symbols.

JOJAN X1, DURHAM UNIVERSITY X1, HENRI BREUIL X1, GUARDIA CIVIL X1, STATE MUSEUMS IN BERLIN-ETHNOLOGICAL MUSEUM/MARTIN FRANKEN X1, GETTY IMAGES X2, WELLCOME COLLECTION/PUBLIC DOMAIN X1

ROMAN CONCRETE'S 'SELF-HEALING' PROPERTIES PROVE LASTING

Concrete used by the Romans in buildings like the Pantheon (*below*) has long been noted for its durability. But new research shows the technique used to create the material may be the secret to its staying power. Analysis of ancient samples has revealed the presence of porous lime clasts, indicating that the Romans combined lime with volcanic components in a process called 'hot mixing' before adding water. The moisture caused the lime to recrystallise, which strengthened the concrete. This method could be cost-effective to posterity.

TIP-OFF LEADS TO THE RECOVERY OF AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL HORDE ALONG SPAIN'S COSTA BLANCA

Spanish police have retrieved hundreds of artefacts, including skeletal remains believed to be up to 5,000 years old, from two homes near Dénia. Officers have concluded that the collection was obtained illegally after no documents proving ownership came to light. Among the 350 items were Phoenician and Roman antiquities; notebooks found at the scene detailing the location of the objects' discovery are now being used to estimate the find's fiscal value and significance.

THE TOXIC LEGACY THREATENING THE REPATRIATION OF ARTEFACTS

The return of objects plundered at the height of European colonialism may come with a health warning. In Germany, research has proven that museums at the turn of the 19th century turned to the pesticide industry to prevent infestations destroying artefacts. In Berlin, this 15th-century mask made by the Kogi, an indigenous group from north Colombia, has been earmarked for repatriation. However, it was sprayed throughout the 1940s and 1950s with 1,4-dichlorobenzene, an agent that can potentially cause cancer.

135

The age of a handwritten message in a bottle found under the floorboards of an Edinburgh property

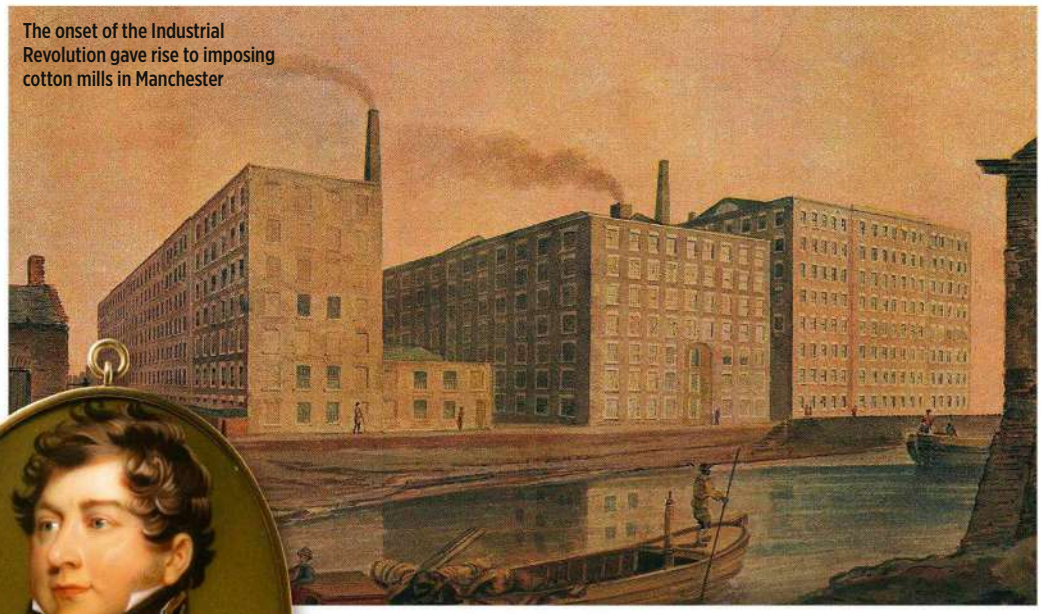
NATIONAL TRUST FILM EXPLORES DISABILITY WITHIN ITS COLLECTIONS

The National Trust and the University of Leicester have produced *Everywhere and Nowhere*, a film that brings the stories of historical figures who lived with various physical conditions to life through the Trust's sites and objects. The film presents the likes of Henry VIII (*right*) – who suffered with mobility issues for most of his life, despite his public image as an agile and robust king. Also under the spotlight is Victorian artist Sarah Biffin (*far right*). Born without arms and only vestigial legs, she learned to paint using her mouth.

The Blanketeers go on the march

After the Napoleonic Wars, Britain fell into a recession – and the poor suffered the most. **Danny Bird** reveals how a protest calling for better pay and working conditions was met with violence and contempt

On 10 March 1817, thousands of textile workers converged on St Peter's Field, near Manchester. Organised by local firebrands Samuel Drummond and John Bagguley, the rally was the start of a march south to London to present the Prince Regent (the future King George IV) with a petition for better pay and working conditions. Those in attendance – many of them weavers – had been encouraged to bring blankets in anticipation of sleeping along the roadside. But as they prepared to embark on their long journey, magistrates ordered the King's Dragoon Guards to disperse what they perceived as the start of an insurrection – and chaos ensued.



The onset of the Industrial Revolution gave rise to imposing cotton mills in Manchester

Many workers believed George, the Prince Regent, capable of bringing their demands to bear on stubborn politicians

GROWING TENSIONS

The discontent had already been brewing for some time. By the turn of the 19th century, weaving had become the main livelihood for the many unemployed agricultural workers, demobilised soldiers and Irish immigrants across northern England, and in May 1808, Parliament's rejection of a legal minimum wage (which some employers supported) triggered a strike in Manchester that was violently put down. As the years passed, the government's dogged refusal to intercede on behalf of workers steered many towards radicalism.

The life of a weaver was far from plain sailing, and negative perceptions of their work prevailed: wage-cutting was standard practice among manufacturers at this time, while local magistrates believed that the relative prosperity of weavers to other workers meant they were more prone to idleness. Furthermore, during downturns, bosses snatched up desperate weavers, which led to the overproduction of unwanted goods. During boom times they would then flood the market with the surplus at deflated prices, while keeping workers' salaries at recession levels.

RADICALS AND SPIES

The conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 gave way to one such economic depression in Britain, swiftly followed in 1816 by a disastrous harvest – the so-called 'year without a summer'. As the political climate turned volatile and radicals started demanding parliamentary reform (until 1832, only a tiny minority of Britons were allowed to vote, and cities like Manchester had no representation in Westminster), the government became anxious. Its fears were heightened when, on 28 January 1817, the Prince Regent's carriage was attacked while leaving the state opening of Parliament.

Within weeks, *habeas corpus* (the right to appeal unlawful detention before a court) was suspended and the Seditious Meetings Act prohibited groups of 50 individuals or more from assembling without giving prior notice to a magistrate. Anyone suspected of disseminating radical literature was to be arrested. Amid this crackdown, major textile centres like Manchester played host to reform groups throughout the winter of 1816–17.

However, the distance between the north's industrial hubs, let alone the capital, was a key weakness in their ability

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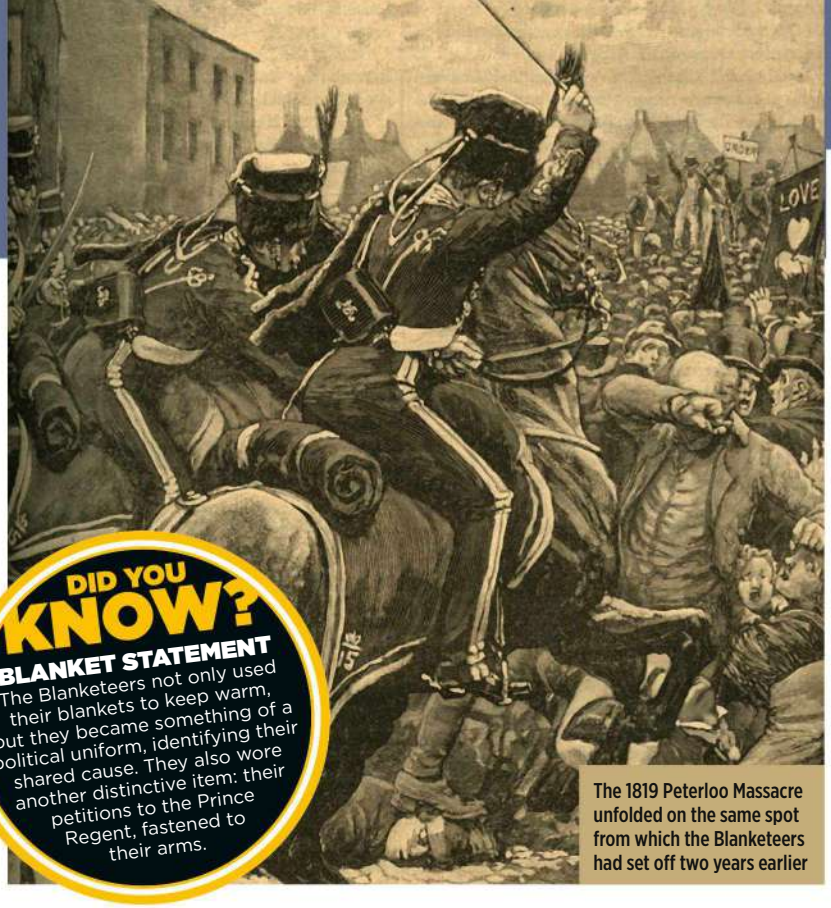


The 1819 Peterloo Massacre unfolded on the same spot from which the Blanketeers had set off two years earlier

DID YOU KNOW?

BLANKET STATEMENT

The Blanketeers not only used their blankets to keep warm, but they became something of a political uniform, identifying their shared cause. They also wore another distinctive item: their petitions to the Prince Regent, fastened to their arms.

> "The government's dogged refusal to intercede on behalf of workers steered many towards radicalism"

to build an effective lobby against laissez-faire economics – the principle of the state's non-intervention in market forces. Simultaneously, the authorities planted spies among reform groups and kept watch over their activities, primed to detain anyone suspected of inciting insurrection. The presence of noted radicals like William Benbow and Joseph Mitchell in the region that winter quickly drew their attention.

AN URBAN UPRISING

As the Riot Act was read out on 10 March 1817, chaos and confusion swept through the crowd of about 25,000 people gathered on St Peter's Field. Drummond and Bagguley were arrested, and the multitude dispersed. Nevertheless, some 600 of the Blanketeers set off as planned. The marchers proceeded in groups of 10 so as not to be accused of unlawful behaviour, as instructed by the march's organisers. Buoyed up, they were confident that their arrival in the towns along the route to London would galvanise others to join them.

With the cavalry hot on their heels, the march reached Stockport – less than 10 miles from Manchester – where more than 200 people were detained. By the time some dauntless Blanketeers arrived in Macclesfield, however, the authorities had prevailed in their ruthless campaign, and the march dissipated. Many Blanketeers sustained injuries from sabres and an onlooker was killed by a dragoon. Ultimately, only one demonstrator, Abel Couldwell, reached London and succeeded in handing over his petition.

In the wake of the fiasco, Manchester continued to be a focal point for unrest. A year later, cotton-spinners in the city staged a strike, demanding a minimum wage of 13 shillings per week. Spies notified the government that the spinners were also attempting to form a general trade union: the 'Philanthropic Hercules'. Local magistrates identified Bagguley as a prime instigator in their letters to the home secretary, Henry Addington.

Months after the Blanketeers' March, authorities in Lancashire responded by establishing the Manchester and Salford Yeomanry to enforce public order. In August 1819, the regiment became notorious for its role in the Peterloo Massacre, when some 500 people were injured and at least 11 were killed during a cavalry charge aimed at suppressing a demonstration for parliamentary reform on St Peter's Field. The fight for real democracy – as well as better pay and working conditions – would go on.

OTHER ANNIVERSARIES

A LOOK BACK AT OTHER EVENTS THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN MARCH THROUGHOUT HISTORY

25 March 421 AD

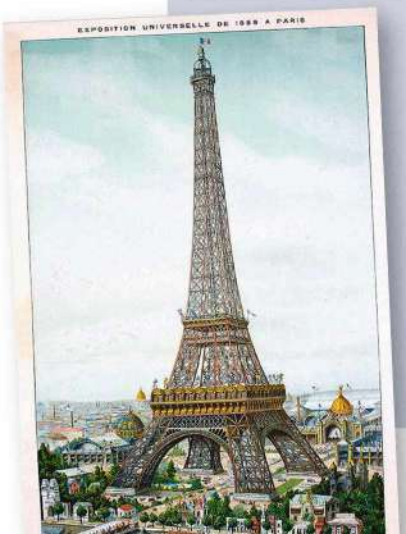
VENICE IS FOUNDED

The Church of San Giacomo is consecrated at the stroke of noon on the Feast of the Annuciation. The building towers over the Rialto islet, located within a marshy lagoon alongside Italy's northeastern Adriatic coastline. Although tribes have already been living in the region for centuries, later generations of Venetians will come to credit the building's foundation as the start of their city's rise to global prominence.

11 March 1708

ROYAL DISSENT

Acting on the advice of her ministers, Queen Anne refuses to approve a bill regarding the creation of a new Scottish militia. But she has good reason to do so: on the same day, a Franco-Jacobite invasion force seeking to put her half-brother James on the throne is spotted sailing to Scotland, and there are fears that such a militia would end up supporting the rebels. The fleet is ultimately chased away, and Anne remains queen until her death in 1714. It will be the last time (to date) that a bill is refused royal assent.



31 March 1889

THE EIFFEL TOWER OPENS

Standing 312 metres (1,024ft) tall, an elegant iron structure is unveiled in Paris as the gateway to the 1889 International Exposition. The work of architect Gustave Eiffel, it is the winning design out of more than 100 entries. Although the tower is originally only permitted to stand for 20 years, it ends up becoming a permanent fixture of the landscape.

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THE HISTORY DETECTIVE

DR NELL DARBY INVESTIGATES COLD CASES FROM THE ARCHIVES

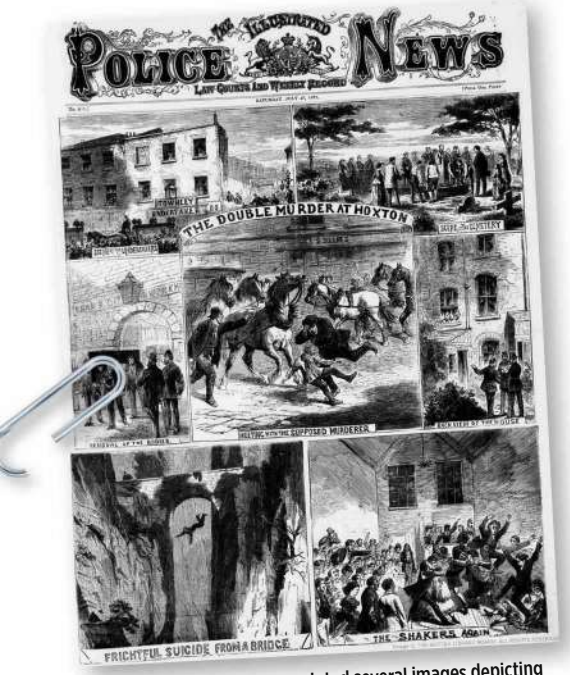
CASE #007

THE HOXTON HORROR

DR NELL DARBY ASKS WHETHER THE BRUTAL 1872 KILLING OF A MOTHER AND DAUGHTER WAS THE WORK OF A STRANGER, OR SOMEONE CLOSER TO HOME

It really was a Victorian horror story: two 11-year-old boys go into their local print shop to buy some writing paper and envelopes, only to find the shop owners absent. After waiting some time, and noticing blood on the shop counter, they go to fetch a neighbour, who finds two bodies behind the counter. The owners – an elderly widow and her 38-year-old daughter – have been beaten to death with a plasterer's hammer; nobody is ever convicted of their murders.

This double murder took place on 10 July 1872. The shop was run by the twice-widowed Sarah Squire, who, after the death of her printseller husband, took over his business, aided by her daughters Jemima and Christiana. Jemima then left, leaving Sarah and Christiana to manage the shop, at 46 Hyde Road in Hoxton, together.



The *Illustrated Police News* printed several images depicting the aftermath of Sarah and Christiana's killings, including a picture of the supposed murderer fleeing the scene

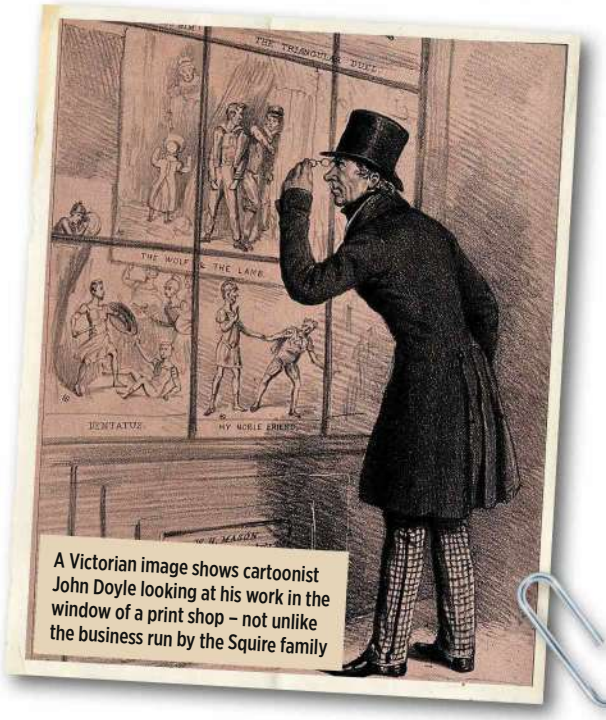
It was seen as a quiet place, run by two women who were settled in their ways, and who neighbours regarded as "penurious".

Their deaths were regarded as the result of an attempted burglary, albeit one committed in broad daylight. They were believed to have been attacked around midday, and their attackers had ransacked the building. It was Archibald Trower and William Eyre who had gone to the shop just after 1pm to buy goods and found nobody there to serve them; and it was grocer's wife Harriet Dodd, of 73 Hyde Road, who was fetched by the two boys and who found the women's bodies.

MYSTERY SUSPECT

Initially, the police thought they would have little trouble finding the killer. They received information that the women's shop had been "watched" for a few days, and that the shop may have been subject to an attempted burglary shortly before. In addition, the killer would have been soaked in blood, and he had taken the murder weapon away with him. A waggoner saw a man running from the house at the time of the murder, but by the time he reported this, three days had elapsed and the suspicious man was seen to have had a good head-start from the police and "the scent seems to have cooled". The women's savings – or certainly a good deal of it – was found under the sacking of one of their beds, so had not been stolen.

What is significant is that the police seem to have had a suspect – someone who had been following a "discreditable course of life" for a long time, and who some had believed to be dead because he hadn't been heard of for a while. No name was given for this man, but it could be significant that Sarah's eldest child, Edwin, who worked as a musician, had years before walked out on his wife and three daughters, forcing his wife to seek poor relief. In fact, Sarah had been called upon by the authorities to give information about her errant son. However, Edwin later turned up again and reconciled with his wife. Was he suspected of involvement in the murders of his mother and half-sister, or were the police looking for another man?



A Victorian image shows cartoonist John Doyle looking at his work in the window of a print shop – not unlike the business run by the Squire family

The killer was never found, but the tragedy for the Squire family did not end with the double murder. Three weeks after Sarah and Christiana were killed, Sarah's older daughter, Jemima, died in the Poplar workhouse, aged just 42.

DR NELL DARBY is a crime historian and writer, and the presenter of the CBS Reality series *Murder by the Sea*. Her latest book is *Sister Sleuths: Female Detectives in Britain* (Pen & Sword History, 2021)

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The Servile Wars

A series of conquests turned the Roman Republic into the centre of a vast slave empire. **Danny Bird** reveals how this exploitative system led to three major rebellions that threatened the security of Rome itself

WHAT WERE THE SERVILE WARS AND WHAT CAUSED THEM?

Between 135 and 71 BC, the Roman Republic was shaken by three separate large-scale slave uprisings known as the Servile Wars. The first two of these occurred on the island of Sicily. The third war, which was much larger in scale, and is probably the best-known, was led by the insurgent gladiator Spartacus.

By the last two centuries BC, Rome had amassed an empire that encompassed the full span of the Mediterranean. Several dazzling military conquests had enabled the small city-state to wield dominance over a vast array of cultures and civilisations. Control of trade routes and exotic commodities brought untold wealth and prestige, including a plentiful supply of slaves from places as far removed as Gaul, Syria and Greece.

The withdrawal of Rome's great rival, Carthage, from Sicily at the end of the Second Punic War in 201 BC triggered a scramble for land by wealthy Romans. An exploitative plantation system soon covered the island, through which slaves were forced to toil under abysmal conditions.

Rome's military might was such that a stable market for cheap slaves was always guaranteed, and many slave owners found it more economical to 'wear out' their slaves and replace them with fresh cohorts rather than to tend to their provision and care. Thousands of people perished each year.

WHAT HAPPENED DURING THE FIRST TWO WARS?

In 135 BC, slaves on Sicily turned to a Syrian-born conjurer called Eunus to deplore their owner's brutality. Proclaiming himself their king, Eunus and hundreds of slaves rebelled and captured the central city of Enna. Following the massacre of most of its inhabitants, the uprising spread to other towns, including Agrigentum, which was overrun by approximately 5,000 insurgents under the command of a slave named Cleon.

The slaves routed every general the Senate dispatched to Sicily until Publius Rupilius triumphed in 132 BC. After besieging several cities, the Roman consul ordered the mass execution of prisoners, who were first tortured before being hurled off a cliff. Cleon was killed during the siege of Enna, while Eunus was captured and succumbed to disease while in custody.

Decades later, in 104 BC, a second war broke out as a result of Rome's geopolitical machinations. When the allied Kingdom of Bithynia (in what is now northern Turkey) was unable to satisfy a request for human chattel to fight along the Republic's northern frontier, slaves from Rome's allies were freed by the Senate. Enraged, those who remained in bondage seized major cities, including Morgantia on Sicily. In 100 BC, Rome reasserted its control and condemned the insurrectionaries to face wild beasts in the arena. Defiant to the end, they killed one another instead.

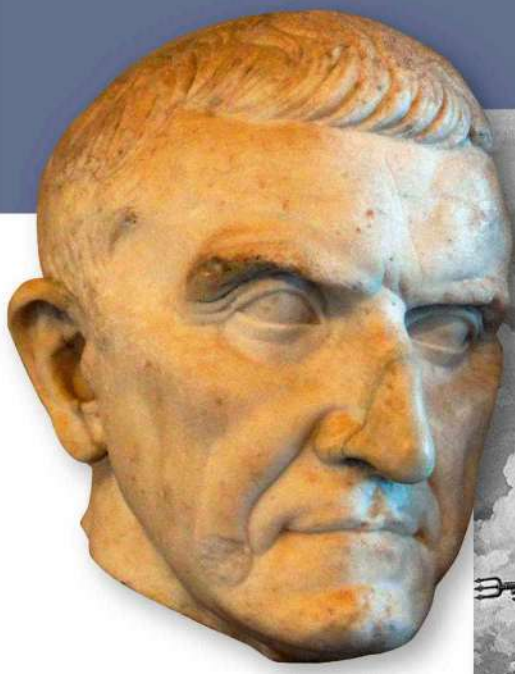
WHO WAS SPARTACUS?

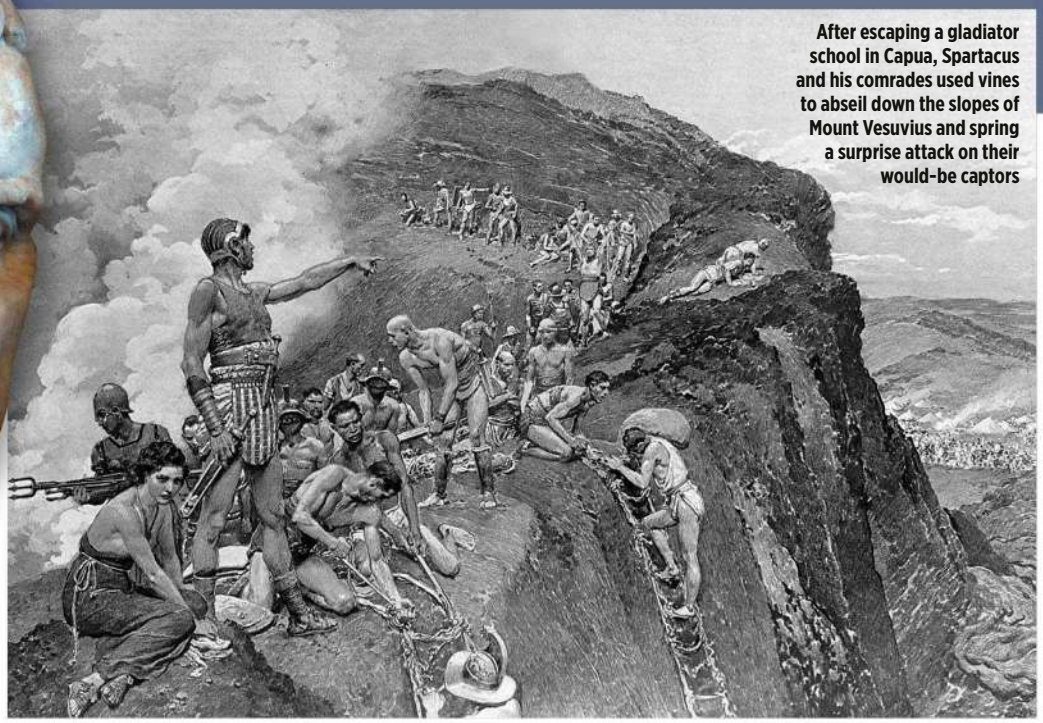
Aside from accounts suggesting that he was born in Thrace (in the eastern Balkans), very little is known about Spartacus's early life. A possible deserter

BELOW LEFT: **A modern statue of Eunus, the Syrian-born conjurer who led the First Servile War in the second century BC**

BELOW RIGHT: **Eunus's uprising led to slaves turning on wealthy Romans, triggering massacres in towns and cities across Sicily**

ALAMY X5





After escaping a gladiator school in Capua, Spartacus and his comrades used vines to abseil down the slopes of Mount Vesuvius and spring a surprise attack on their would-be captors

from the Roman army, he was sold into slavery with his wife, a prophet, who is said to have discovered a snake coiled on her husband's face as he slept – a portent of greatness. Spartacus was then consigned to a gladiatorial school at Capua in southern Italy, where condemned men were trained to fight to the death for popular entertainment.

HOW DID SPARTACUS MANAGE TO IGNITE A REBELLION?

In 73 BC, Spartacus escaped the school, leading a band of fellow gladiators to Mount Vesuvius, where they set up an encampment. Alerted to the fugitives, a Roman militia of 3,000 men blocked the volcano's only access route, hoping to starve them into submission.

However, the slaves had an ingenious plan. After fashioning vines into ropes and ladders, they abseiled down the opposite side of Vesuvius, before ambushing the militia and annihilating them. A second Roman force met a similar fate, and soon, other slaves were rallying under Spartacus's banner. The third war had begun.

WHERE DID THE SLAVES GO NEXT?

Spartacus's slave army swept across the Italian peninsula, their ranks swelling to more than 90,000 men. The rebels resisted Roman offensives and marched as far north as the Alps, but – in an extraordinary volte-face – they turned back in the opposite direction and ended up in the southwestern region of Lucania.

Historians such as Plutarch later speculated that Spartacus and his comrades may have sought to return to their homelands, but there isn't a reliable primary source regarding their intentions.

DID SPARTACUS'S REBELLION HAVE ANY POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES IN ROME?

Alarmed by the threat, the Roman Senate deployed consular armies to crush the uprising. Among the most powerful was the army led by the wealthy general Marcus Licinius Crassus, who assumed command of more than 48,000 fighters. Their initial efforts were weak, however, and around 10 per cent of Crassus's soldiers were executed as punishment (a practice known as decimation).

However, Crassus's entry into the conflict marked a crucial turning point. As he pursued Spartacus southwards, he managed to trap the rebels in the 'toe' of the Italian peninsula by digging 40-mile-long trench. Although Spartacus was able to pass over the trench after nightfall, a splinter group of Gallic and Germanic slaves was slaughtered by the Romans. Pressing his advantage, Crassus petitioned the Senate to recall two other generals, Lucius Licinius Lucullus and Pompey, from overseas.

With these reinforcements, Spartacus was killed in combat during a decisive battle near the mouth of the River Silarius, and the remnants of the slave army were either picked off by Pompey or crucified by Crassus along the Appian Way. Pompey was accorded a triumph, and both he and Crassus were appointed consuls in recognition of their service to the Republic.

> "The gladiator-turned-rebel leader remains a universal icon of the struggle against oppression in all its forms"

ABOVE LEFT: **A bust of Crassus, the ruthlessly ambitious Roman statesman who saw Spartacus's rebellion as an opportunity to boost his own profile**

BELOW: **A Victorian-era engraving depicts Spartacus's demise along the banks of the River Silarius**

WHAT WAS THE LEGACY OF SPARTACUS'S UPRISING?

The Enlightenment philosopher Voltaire described Spartacus's rebellion as "the only just war in history". Notably, he would also be a key source of inspiration to the victors of the slave-led Haitian Revolution (1791–1804), with their leader, Toussaint L'Ouverture, even lauded as the 'Black Spartacus'. Later figures to cite Spartacus as a personal hero would include Karl Marx, while in the early 20th century, German communists Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht branded their radical movement the 'Spartacus League' in his honour.

More than 2,000 years after his death, the gladiator-turned-rebel leader remains a universal icon of the struggle against oppression in all its forms.

READ
From concubines to miners, discover more about the lives of slaves in ancient Rome: *historyextra.com/roman-slavery*

Bess of Hardwick: rival of the Virgin Queen

The most powerful woman in Elizabethan England was undoubtedly Elizabeth I herself. But, thanks to her business acumen and skilful navigation of the Tudor marriage market, Bess of Hardwick ranks a close second

During the second half of the 16th century, two women stood atop English society. Both were fabulously wealthy landowners, both revered and admired, both independently shaped their own destinies in a man's world, both were redheads, and both were named Elizabeth. Yet while one – the queen, Elizabeth I – famously went her reign without a husband, Elizabeth 'Bess' of Hardwick contrived advantageous marriages four times to amass her fortune, elevate her status, and feed her ambition to build something for herself.

The first of Bess's marriages came when still a teenager, around 1543. She had been born in the 1520s into the gentry of Derbyshire, but with much of the family estate seized by the Crown following her father's death, her sole chance of advancement relied on finding a suitable husband. Not that her first marriage, to a younger neighbour named Robert Barlow could be described as suitable: he died shortly afterwards, with the union probably unconsummated.

NUPTIALS AND SCANDALS

Bess soon remarried, this time to a much better match. Her second husband was Sir William Cavendish, treasurer of Henry VIII's chamber, who had become rich during the Dissolution of the Monasteries. Despite Cavendish being 20 years Bess's senior, the decade-long marriage seemed to be a genuinely happy one and produced eight children, six of whom survived past infancy. Almost certainly on Bess's insistence, the couple bought the Derbyshire estate of Chatsworth and erected a luxurious house filled with the finest furnishings. This was the first of Bess's great building projects.

She also had to learn how to survive through upheavals. Cavendish's death in 1557 left Bess in debt, only for her to marry again within a couple of years to the extremely wealthy Sir William St Loe, captain of Elizabeth I's guard. Soon, Bess had become a gentlewoman of the privy chamber. Being at the centre of the Elizabethan court risked being whipped up in political scandal, though. In 1561, convinced of a brewing plot against her, the queen had Bess thrown into the Tower of London, and after releasing her months later sent Bess packing back to Derbyshire in disgrace.

The effigy adorning Bess's marble tomb in Derby Cathedral (formerly All Saints Church), where she was buried in 1608

Yet survive she did. Following the death of her third husband in 1565, Bess inherited a vast estate and an annual income of £60,000 (around £20m today). Two years later, she married one of the richest men in the kingdom, George Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury, and together they made the ultimate power couple. They even arranged a joint wedding between two of Bess's children and two of Shrewsbury's to establish something of a dynasty.

The new Countess of Shrewsbury was back in favour at the royal court as well, so much so that when the queen needed to appoint a keeper for Mary, Queen of Scots – her cousin, forced from the Scottish throne and who, as a Catholic, posed a threat to her own crown – she chose Bess and her husband. While a prestigious role, it proved resource-draining and stressful. Still, they kept Mary captive in one of their estates for 15 years, until Bess and the fallen queen's relationship eventually imploded.

Bess ran afoul of Elizabeth again too: in 1574, she arranged a marriage for one of her daughters and the son of Margaret Douglas, Countess of Lennox, against the queen's wishes. Then when that match produced a child, Arbella, Bess set her sights on raising her granddaughter to be successor to the English throne. This caused tension not only with Elizabeth, but caused the animosity with Mary (who wanted her own son, James, to be heir) and strained relations with her husband and, eventually, Arbella herself.

BUILDING A LEGACY

Ambitious and determined, Bess showed time and time again that she could be a strong and shrewd businesswoman. After separating from her fourth (and final) husband, she went to court and secured ownership of Chatsworth and a substantial income. She used her fortune to buy more land, acquire more properties, invest in businesses such as mines, and act as a moneylender. Above all else, though, she embarked on huge building projects.

Her crowning glory was Hardwick Hall near Chesterfield, Derbyshire, which she completed by 1597. Bess had been renovating and expanding the old Hardwick Hall when a hefty inheritance from Shrewsbury's death in 1590 encouraged her to have a whole new building erected right next to it. Designed by renowned architect Robert Smythson, the three-storey house was as magnificent as any royal palace and boasted so many windows (which were highly expensive at the time) that it inspired the rhyme: "Hardwick Hall, more glass than wall".

On top of the towers were carved Bess's initials, "ES", a potent display of her wealth, status and power. Long after her death, on 13 February 1608, Hardwick Hall stands as a monument to one of the most powerful people of the late Tudor era; the other Elizabeth who, in her own way, ruled England.

WORDS: JONNY WILKES

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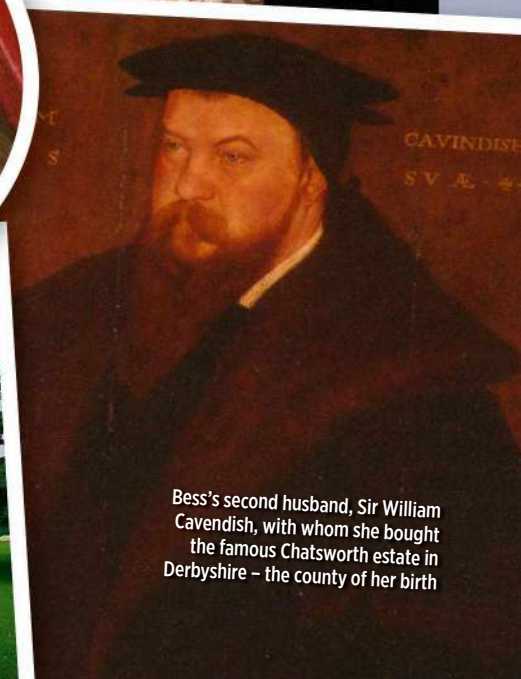
“Ambitious and determined, Bess showed time and time again that she could be a strong, shrewd businesswoman”

A portrait of Bess of Hardwick painted in the 1560s, while she was married to Sir William St Loe. Today, Bess is best remembered for her lavish building projects, notably Chatsworth House and Hardwick Hall



RIGHT: **Hardwick Hall, completed in 1597, was commissioned by Bess following the death of her fourth husband, George Talbot**

CENTRE: **A portrait of Bess’s granddaughter, Lady Arbella Stuart. The countess’s desire for Arbella to inherit the English throne led to a major dispute with Queen Elizabeth I**

Bess’s second husband, Sir William Cavendish, with whom she bought the famous Chatsworth estate in Derbyshire – the county of her birth

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10 THINGS YOU (PROBABLY) DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THE HISTORY OF LONDON

From long-lost islands to scandalous weddings, **Richard Guard** shines a spotlight on the English capital's forgotten landmarks and traditions

1 THE CHARING CROSS WAS BUILT AS A MEMORIAL TO KING EDWARD I'S WIFE

Also known as Eleanor's Cross, the original Charing Cross was erected by Edward I following the death of his wife of 36 years, Eleanor of Castile, in 1290.

Edward had a memorial cross erected at every resting place of her funeral procession, the last being in the village of Charing – a stopover between the City of London and Westminster. The current cross, built in the forecourt of Charing Cross station, is a Victorian replacement of the original, 180 yards away from its former location, now marked by a statue of Charles I on horseback looking down Whitehall.

ABOVE: The present-day Charing Cross, seen here in c1910, was built in the 19th century after the original monument was demolished during the Civil Wars

RIGHT: Decimus Burton's Colosseum, completed in 1827, housed a huge canvas panorama of London

GETTY IMAGES X9

2 CHELSEA BUNS WERE A GEORGIAN TREAT

In the early 1700s, Chelsea Bun House was opened in Jew's Row (now Pimlico Road), and it became the site of the invention of Chelsea buns. Its proprietor, Richard Hand, decorated the interior with clocks and curious artefacts.

In its day, the Bun House was hugely famous, prompting satirist Jonathan Swift to celebrate the "Rrrrrrrare Chelsea buns" after he visited in 1711. It even found popularity among royalty, with both George II and George III visiting with their wives and children.

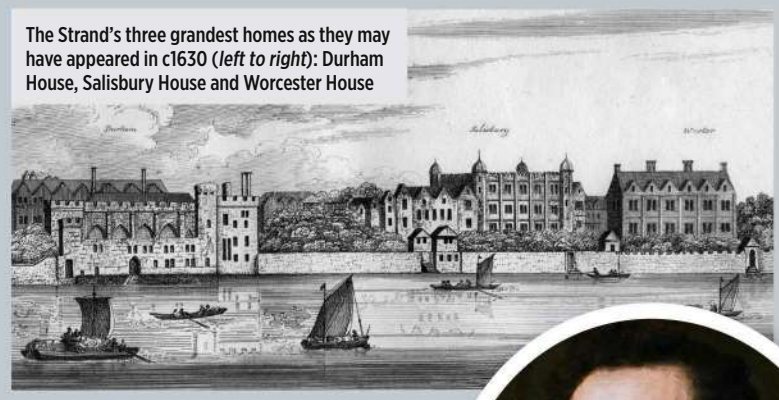
So successful was the business that on Good Fridays, crowds of more than 50,000 people gathered outside the premises to purchase its products.

3 ST PAUL'S DIDN'T ALWAYS HAVE THE LARGEST DOME

A vast rotunda known as the Colosseum was built in Regent's Park by Decimus Burton between 1824 and 1827, featuring a dome slightly larger than that of St Paul's Cathedral. It housed a huge canvas panorama of London, painted by Thomas Hornor.

However, the attraction's initial popularity soon waned, and in 1831 the building was sold to opera singer John Barham, whose dream to turn it into an opera house took both his fortune and his health. Briefly used for magic-lantern shows, the Colosseum was demolished in 1874 or 1875, and is now covered by Cambridge Gate.

The Euston Arch was completed in 1837 at a cost of £35,000 – the equivalent of more than £3m today



The Strand's three grandest homes as they may have appeared in c1630 (*left to right*): Durham House, Salisbury House and Worcester House

4 THE STRAND WAS HOME TO LONDON'S RICH AND FAMOUS

For 800 years before the Embankment was built, the Strand was the site of many of London's finest houses – it boasted river views and close proximity to both the City of London and Westminster.

Durham House, an example of one such fine residence, was originally built in the mid-14th century as the town house of the Bishop of Durham (though there had been a residence of the Bishop of Durham on the site since at least 1220). It went on to serve as residence to both Cardinal Wolsey and Anne Boleyn, and eventually became the home of Sir Walter Ralegh (*pictured above*). While living there, Ralegh was memorably drenched with beer by a servant who feared that his master had caught fire when he found him smoking.

5 EUSTON ONCE BOASTED BRITAIN'S LARGEST ARCH

When Euston station was first opened in 1837, its entrance was dominated by Euston Arch, which stood 70ft high and was supported by four Doric columns, making it the largest arch in Great Britain.

Some 100 years later, with the Victoria and Adelaide hotels having been built either side, the arch was recognised as a major landmark and, according to one author, "the most imposing entrance to a London terminus".

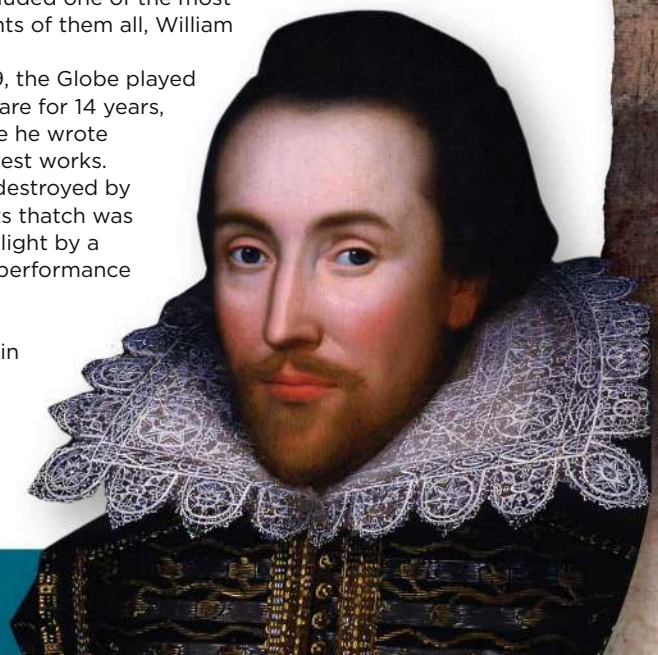
When the station entrance was completely redesigned and rebuilt in 1962, the heedless demolition of the arch galvanised the nascent preservation movement. Although it failed to save the arch, many other historic buildings owe their survival to groups formed as a result.

6 THE ORIGINAL GLOBE THEATRE EXISTED FOR JUST 14 YEARS

Considering that it is perhaps the most famous theatre in the world, the original Globe had a surprisingly short – though highly eventful – existence. It was built by the Lord Chamberlain's Men, a company of actors that included one of the most famous playwrights of them all, William Shakespeare.

Opened in 1599, the Globe played host to Shakespeare for 14 years, during which time he wrote many of his greatest works. The theatre was destroyed by fire in 1613 after its thatch was accidentally set alight by a cannon during a performance of *Henry VIII*.

A replacement theatre was built in 1614, but this was demolished in 1644 after plays were banned by the Long Parliament.



RIGHT: **A 17th-century depiction of the original Globe theatre, before it met its fiery end during a performance**

BELOW: **William Shakespeare was one of the theatre's six shareholders**

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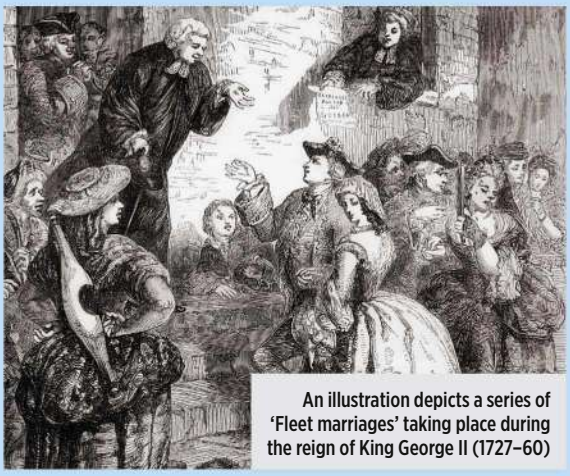


An illustration depicts a series of 'Fleet marriages' taking place during the reign of King George II (1727–60)

7 LONDONERS COULD HAVE LAS VEGAS-STYLE WEDDINGS

Between 1613 and 1754, a legal loophole meant that on-the-spot marriages could be carried out in an area surrounding the Fleet Prison known as the 'Liberties of the Fleet'.

There is suspicion that some of the matches took place against the will of one or other of the parties, but judging from the number of unions made (estimated to be around 200,000 in just 60 years up to 1753), it seems more likely that the ability to marry without parental consent might well have been the more common motivation.

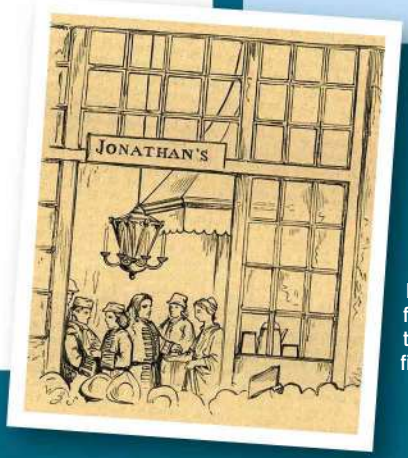
The Liberties of the Fleet in many ways resembled the Las Vegas of today – a notorious area famed for debauchery, where the reach of the law was restricted.

8 THE LONDON STOCK EXCHANGE WAS ORIGINALLY A COFFEE SHOP

In 1680, Jonathan Miles opened Jonathan's Coffee Shop in Bank. By 1690 there were more than 100 companies trading their shares in the city, and traders would meet at Jonathan's to gather news from other traders, and from merchants entering the city via the Thames.

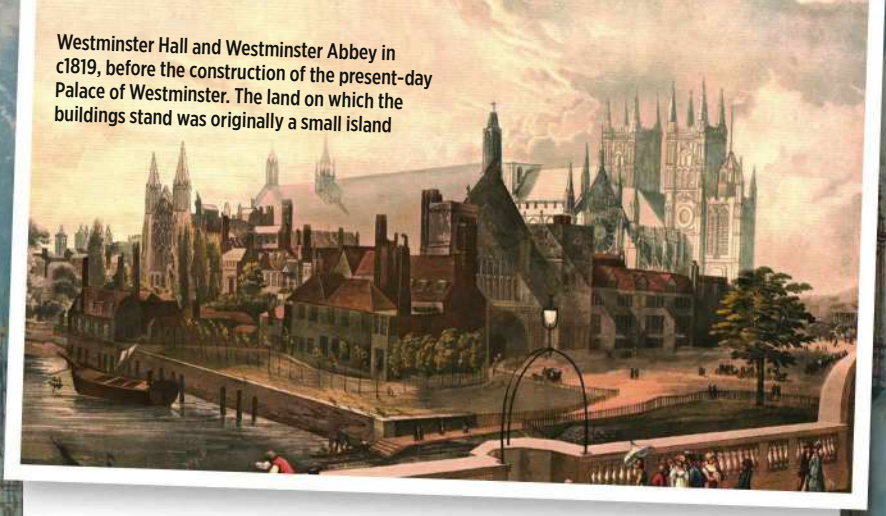
At Jonathan's, the news was written up on boards behind the bar. Over time, traders developed a network of runners who would bring them all the latest on returning ships.

The coffee house burnt down during the devastating Cornhill fire of 1748, but was later rebuilt with the support of brokers and given the name New Jonathan's. It then became the Stock Exchange in 1773.



ABOVE RIGHT: **A view of the 'Old' London Bridge, c1600, complete with heads on pikes. Two subsequent bridges have existed on the site since then**

LEFT: **Jonathan's evolved from a coffee shop into the beating heart of the financial district**



Westminster Hall and Westminster Abbey in c1819, before the construction of the present-day Palace of Westminster. The land on which the buildings stand was originally a small island

9 THERE WAS AN ISLAND IN THE MIDDLE OF WESTMINSTER

Originally formed by a loop of the Thames and the division of the Tyburn River, it is thought that Thorney Island may have been inhabited by the Romans.

King Offa (who died in AD 796) issued a charter describing it as a *loco terribili* ('terrible place'), while its modern name derived from the thorns that covered the area.

It went on to become the site of Westminster Abbey and the Palace of Westminster, now better known as the Houses of Parliament.

With the land drained and the river covered over, Thorney Island has long since disappeared, although the name lives on in Thorney Street, which runs parallel to Millbank, off Horseferry Road.

10 SEVERED HEADS WERE DISPLAYED ON LONDON BRIDGE

London Bridge has long been central to life in the capital, but one of its more macabre purposes was as a site for the display of traitors' heads, impaled on spikes to serve as a warning to others.

In the late 16th century, Paul Hentzner, a German visitor to the city, made some notes on the bridge: "Upon this is built a tower, on whose top the heads of such as have been executed for high treason are placed on iron spikes: we counted above thirty."

Among those known to have suffered this fate through the centuries are William Wallace, Sir Thomas More and Thomas Cromwell.

RICHARD GUARD is a filmmaker, writer and the author of *Lost London: An A–Z of Forgotten Landmarks and Lost Traditions* (Michael O'Mara Books, 2012)

LISTEN
Historian Dr Oskar Jensen talks about life on the streets of Georgian and Victorian London in an episode of the *HistoryExtra* podcast. Listen now at: *historyextra.com/vagabonds-podcast*

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30 Everything you wanted to know about the Roaring Twenties
Professor Sarah Churchwell answers the big questions surrounding the 1920s – and dispels the notion that it was all fun and games

34 An end to the 'long weekend'
Professor Matt Houlbrook looks at why British society has come to regard the culture of the 1920s through a distinctly US prism

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Find out how Hollywood captured the world's imagination – even if star-studded scandals kept studio executives busy off-camera

40 A New York state of mind
Discover how Harlem emerged as the capital of a new African-American cultural movement

42 Beneath the glitz and glamour
We lift the lid on the decade's dark side: from racism and economic turmoil to the rise of organised crime

47 The age of emancipation
Find out how women's lives mostly changed for the better – on both sides of the Atlantic

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SARAH CHURCHWELL
is a professor of American literature and chair of public understanding of the humanities at the School of Advanced Study, University of London. Her books include *Behold, America: A History of America First and the American Dream* (Bloomsbury, 2018).

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THE DAWN OF A NEW ERA

We chart the key British and American news stories in a decade marked by social, political and cultural upheaval

1920

17 JANUARY
The Eighteenth Amendment to the US Constitution comes into effect (*above*), banning alcohol across the nation in a policy known as prohibition.

18 AUGUST
US women (*above right*) win the right to vote after the Nineteenth Amendment to the constitution is ratified.

11 NOVEMBER
King George V unveils the Cenotaph on Whitehall in tribute to the lives lost during World War I. Meanwhile, an unidentified British soldier from that conflict is interred in the nave of Westminster Abbey.

1921

16 JANUARY
The Kid, a full-length silent feature film written, produced, directed and starring Charlie Chaplin (*below, in bowler hat*) premieres in Chicago.

15 MAY
The British Legion forms to support ex-servicemen.

31 MAY
Mobs of white people begin a massacre of African-American citizens living in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in an atrocity that will claim an estimated 300 lives and cause extensive damage to homes and businesses.

29 JULY
Future Labour Party leader George Lansbury, appalled by the deepening poverty in his ward, leads the Poplar Rates Rebellion in London's East End. Thirty Poplar councillors are imprisoned, leading to solidarity marches across Britain.

13 SEPTEMBER
In Wichita, Kansas, a White Castle hamburger restaurant opens, establishing the world's first fast food chain.

1922

5 FEBRUARY
Reader's Digest is published for the first time by married couple DeWitt and Lila Bell Wallace in New York City.

30 MAY
The Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC (*right*) is dedicated.

18 OCTOBER
The British Broadcasting Company (BBC) is founded in London.

26 NOVEMBER
British Egyptologist Howard Carter becomes the first person to enter the tomb of Tutankhamun in more than 3,000 years. Egyptomania becomes a defining feature of 1920s culture.

1923

1 JANUARY
An act of Parliament consolidates Britain's 120 railway companies into just four large regional enterprises.

4 APRIL
Brothers Jack, Harry, Sam and Albert Warner incorporate their film studio, Warner Bros Inc, in the US.

28 APRIL
Completed ahead of schedule, the Empire Stadium in Wembley hosts its first-ever event: the FA Cup Final (*above*) between Bolton Wanderers and West Ham United.

13 JULY
A gigantic sign spelling out 'Hollywoodland' is dedicated on Mount Lee in Los Angeles.

GETTY IMAGES X11, ALAMY X2

1924

22 JANUARY
Ramsay MacDonald (*above, far left*) forms the first-ever Labour government.

12 FEBRUARY
George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* premieres at the Aeolian Hall in New York City, becoming a landmark composition of the so-called 'jazz age'.

23 APRIL
George V (*above*) becomes the first British monarch to broadcast a speech via radio.

25 OCTOBER
Days before a general election, the *Daily Mail* publishes the 'Zinoviev letter', which purports to be a Soviet directive for a revolution in Britain.

1925

21 FEBRUARY
The first issue of *The New Yorker* magazine is published by married couple Harold Ross and Jane Grant.

10 APRIL
F Scott Fitzgerald's jazz age novel *The Great Gatsby* is published.

28 APRIL
Chancellor of the Exchequer Winston Churchill announces Britain's return to the Gold Standard – a system where a country's currency has a value directly linked to gold.

8 AUGUST
Around 30,000 members of the Ku Klux Klan march through Washington DC.

2 OCTOBER
London's first double-decker buses with enclosed upper decks (*below*) go into service.

1926

26 JANUARY
John Logie Baird (*right*) demonstrates his experiments with television to members of the Royal Institution in his London laboratory.

16 MARCH
In Auburn, Massachusetts, Robert H Goddard successfully launches the first-ever liquid fuel rocket.

3 MAY
A general strike begins in the UK, with martial law being enforced days later.

3 DECEMBER
Crime writer Agatha Christie inexplicably vanishes from her Berkshire home and is found 11 days later in Harrogate, claiming amnesia.

1927

19 FEBRUARY
The 'it girl' enters popular culture upon the release of the silent film *It*, starring Clara Bow (*right*).

22 APRIL
The Mississippi River bursts its banks, resulting in one of the worst natural disasters in US history.

20–21 MAY
Charles Lindbergh completes the first-ever solo flight across the Atlantic, flying non-stop from New York City to Paris.

8 OCTOBER
Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy make their screen debut as a comedy duo in Hal Roach's silent film *The Second Hundred Years*.

1928

25 FEBRUARY
Charles Jenkins Laboratories in Washington DC acquires a television licence from the US Federal Radio Commission.

15 MAY
Mickey Mouse – created by movie mogul Walt Disney and animator Ub Iwerks – makes his debut in the short film *Plane Crazy*.

17 JUNE
Suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst (*right*) dies aged 69.

17–18 JUNE
Amelia Earhart becomes the first woman to fly across the Atlantic as a passenger.

28 SEPTEMBER
Scientist Alexander Fleming discovers penicillin, the world's first antibiotic.

1929

14 FEBRUARY
The St Valentine's Day Massacre occurs in Chicago, with men from the North Side Gang murdered by unidentified assailants.

17 MAY
Notorious mafia boss Al Capone is charged for carrying a concealed weapon and imprisoned.

8 JUNE
Labour MP Margaret Bondfield (*right*) becomes Britain's first-ever female cabinet minister.

28–29 OCTOBER
A massive $30bn is wiped off the New York Stock Exchange in just two days. The Wall Street Crash ushers in the Great Depression of the 1930s. ⊙

WORDS: DANNY BIRD

EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT THE ROARING TWENTIES

Professor Sarah Churchwell answers key questions about the highs and lows of life in the United States in the 1920s

Q: What do we actually mean by the 'Roaring Twenties'?

A: The term was originally coined in the 19th century, when it was used to describe young people aged in their own 'roaring twenties' – particularly men who were sowing their wild oats before settling down.

As for the decade, the 1920s, the explosion of youth culture and emergence of ideas about adolescence at the time meant that 'Roaring Twenties' came to be an appropriate moniker for the period itself. That said, it wasn't in widespread popular use until around 1924, when people started to feel that the decade had a personality and needed to be described in such a way.

Q: Did the 1920s 'roar' for everybody in the US?

A: In terms of thinking about the 1920s as an era when people were having a great time and enjoying a booming economy, that really wasn't true for everyone. Certainly, when we look at the US, the reality of the Roaring Twenties was that it was very much a middle and upper-class phenomenon. It only applied in part for the working classes due to prohibition [the US ban on the sale and import of alcoholic beverages between 1920–33], and it was definitely not a 'roaring' time for the rural poor. Farmers struggled with drought – the beginnings of what would become, in the 1930s, the Dust Bowl – and, of course, this idea of fun and prosperity wasn't true for the vast majority of the country's African-American population either. Many black people were moving north where they believed they would have better opportunities to find work – something known as the Great Migration – but they were still paid less than their white counterparts.

ABOVE: **A band of African-American musicians bring jazz to 1920s Chicago**

LEFT: **The decade was not quite as 'roaring' for poorer Americans working on farms and in factories**

For a small coterie of black people, there was a roaring, if you like, of culture, namely artists and intellectuals in New York City who became associated with the Harlem Renaissance. And with the coming of broadly mass media, there were significant technological changes, including radio, which helped lead to an explosion of African-American music in popular culture.

In short, the 1920s was 'roaring' for certain segments of the population, but economically it was really the middle and upper classes who benefitted the most.

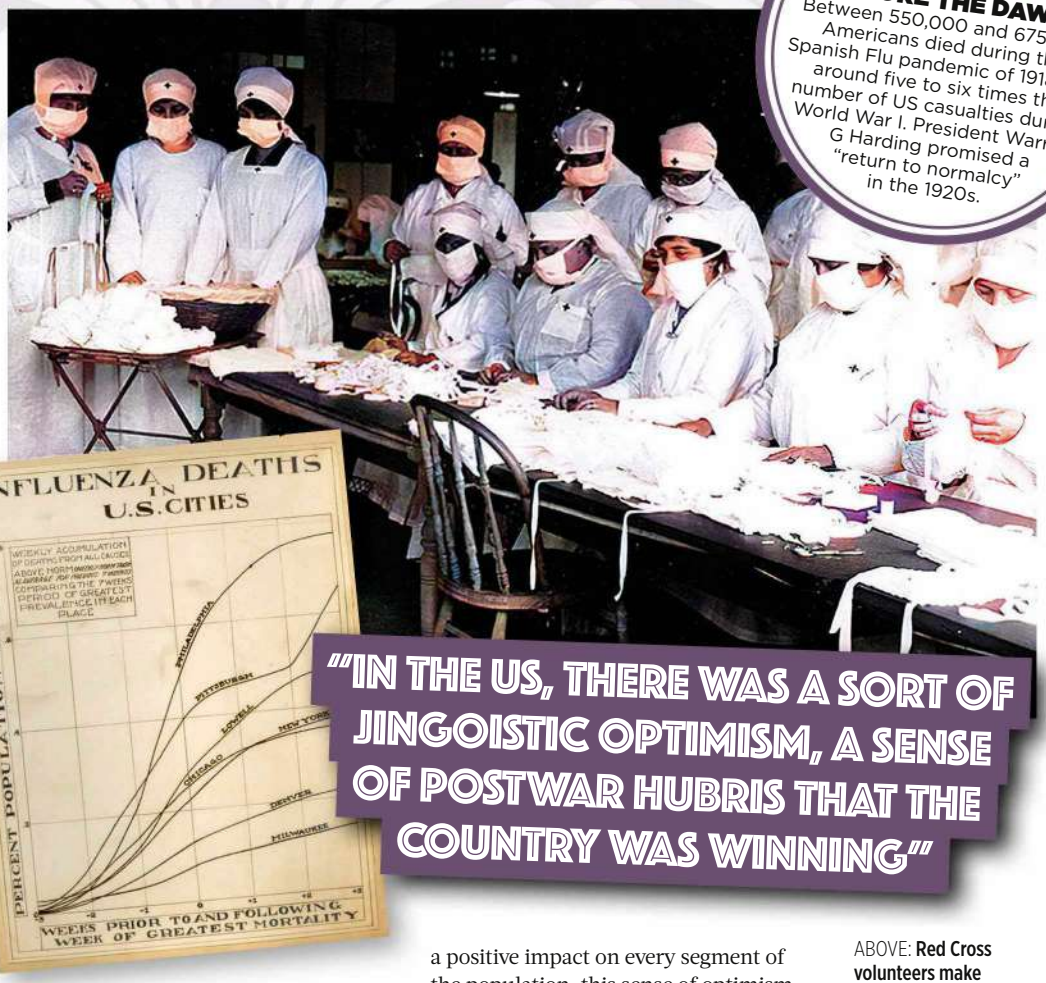
A typically fashionable flapper – sporting bobbed hair and a loose dress – enjoys a dance with a male companion

GETTY IMAGES X5, ALAMY X4

DID YOU KNOW?

BEFORE THE DAWN

Between 550,000 and 675,000 Americans died during the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918–20, around five to six times the number of US casualties during World War I. President Warren G Harding promised a "return to normalcy" in the 1920s.

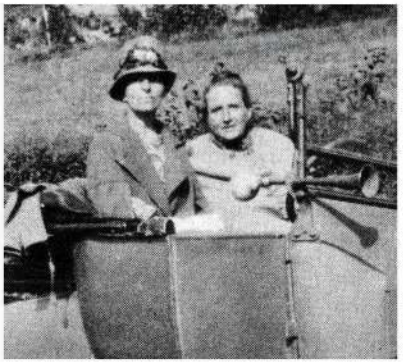


"IN THE US, THERE WAS A SORT OF JINGOISTIC OPTIMISM, A SENSE OF POSTWAR HUBRIS THAT THE COUNTRY WAS WINNING"

ABOVE: **Red Cross volunteers make face masks to combat Spanish Flu, 1918**

ABOVE LEFT: **A chart showing US flu deaths. After the pandemic, many people wanted to live life to the full**

The semi-autobiographical works of Djuna Barnes dealt with issues surrounding sexuality



Celebrated author Gertrude Stein (*right*) openly lived with her partner Alice B Toklas

Q: Was there a sense of optimism in the US at this time, or were people still mourning for a lost generation?

A: That is a hard question to answer, because it calls for a huge generalisation about an entire country. What I will say is that at the beginning of the decade there was still an enormous amount of lingering anxiety from World War I. At the start of 1920, the US was in a serious recession and still enduring the Spanish Flu pandemic, so there was a lot of worry still. We now know that by then, the pandemic was coming to an end, but no one knew that at the time, of course, and people were still anxiously scrutinising newspaper headlines for information on new outbreaks and case numbers. With the Covid-19 pandemic still a reality today, that is something that we can empathise with.

By the mid-1920s, the economic boom was off and running, and, yes, there was widespread optimism. In the US, it was a sort of jingoistic optimism, a sense of postwar hubris that the country was winning and nothing could go wrong. But, just as the economy didn't have a positive impact on every segment of the population, this sense of optimism did not extend throughout the whole of society. Let's remember that, as we talk about the Roaring Twenties and the fun of the jazz age, this was also the age of the Ku Klux Klan: their membership numbers were on the rise, lynchings were on the rise, and black people were being terrorised, intimidated and driven out of the South. The 1920s was a time of tremendous social upheaval and change: some greeted that with optimism, others with horror and dismay.

Q: Can we see an emergence of queer culture during this era?

A: Certainly, across the US, Britain and elsewhere in Europe, there was an emergence of what we might broadly describe as queer cultures. For the first time, some people felt able to be open about their sexualities. We can see this in semi-autobiographical works by authors such as Djuna Barnes, as well as in personal diaries (coded or otherwise) where people showed themselves more and more willing to record who they were, their real desires, and sexual behaviour. There was an emerging conversation around gay artists – in particular writers, painters and filmmakers – and people who were living openly with same-sex partners. While the American author Gertrude Stein and her partner Alice B Toklas are among the most famous, they were by no means the only ones.

During the 1920s, there was a great tolerance of homosexuality in Hollywood, although this would be countered by a big conservative backlash in the following decade with measures like the Hays Code, a set of industry guidelines that prohibited profanity, suggestive nudity, violence, drugs, homosexuality and more, in films released from 1934.

BELOW: **Actor Dorothy Mackaill shows off her legs in 1931's *Safe from Hell*. Hollywood had embraced more liberal attitudes over the previous decade**

"PEOPLE WENT BLIND DRINKING BATHTUB GIN CUT WITH TURPENTINE MIXED WITH GASOLINE"

Q: Given that prohibition was being imposed in the US during the 1920s, what did people drink?

A: What a person drank through prohibition was economically driven: the rich could afford the real thing, which meant drinking smuggled alcohol acquired on the black market. They could get hold of real rums transported from the West Indies on sailboats and into New York Harbor, or real champagne from France. Smuggling across the border with Canada was also an option to get alcohol into the US, but people would have paid through the nose for it.

The urban poor might have drunk a mix of gasoline and water – incredibly lethal combinations like this were sold on the street – while the rural poor turned to homemade moonshine. In the South, this was commonly liquor created from fermented corn. In the North, it was mostly grain-based.

Bathtub gin was really the drink of the middle classes. Pure-grade alcohol could be purchased via chemists for 'medicinal reasons', which could then be diluted and flavoured with oil essences, such as juniper, to try and make it taste like gin. It tasted absolutely awful and was unbelievably potent – it could have still been about 80 per cent alcohol by the time it had been diluted.

That was why a lot of Americans went on to have terrible problems with alcohol later in life, because they had become used to drinking such dangerously strong drinks. Many got alcohol poisoning from the high concentrations and some even went blind from drinking what they were told was bathtub gin, but which had actually been cut with turpentine mixed with gasoline or added poisons in attempts to make it taste like alcohol.

ABOVE LEFT: **A young woman demonstrates a novel way to hide alcohol under her coat during prohibition**

TOP RIGHT: **Bootleggers also had to come up with creative methods for transporting their booze – such as this fake lumber truck**

ABOVE RIGHT: **The 1920s witnessed the rise of the Ku Klux Klan and the slogan "America First"**

Q: How significant was the rise of fascism in this period?

A: The answer to this is going to be different for the US than Europe. Fascism, as a word, entered the English language with Italian politician Benito Mussolini, who emerged on the world stage in 1921 and seized power the following year. And 1922 is also the time when Adolf Hitler started making headlines as a political force in Germany.

In the US, fascism entered the cultural conversation at the exact same time that the Ku Klux Klan was on the rise. The Klan actually likened itself to what Mussolini was doing in Italy, and so everyone understood them as being part of the same movement. So, during the early 1920s, there was a fair amount of discussion around fascism, but by the end of the decade, the conversation was being overtaken by concerns around the economic crash [the Great Depression began in August 1929, with the Wall Street Crash occurring two months later].

The US was vehemently isolationist: it was strenuously anti-immigration and instituted its first major racial quotas in the early 1920s, culminating in the

GETTY IMAGES X7, ALAMY X1

Immigration Act of 1924. This limited the number of immigrants allowed entry into the country through a national origins quota. Some 20 years later, German Jews fleeing the Nazis were turned away on the basis of that law since the quota had been filled.

Ethnonationalist isolationism was mainstream in the US, as was conspiratorial anti-Semitism. By this, I mean the idea that there was a Jewish conspiracy trying to take over the world. This was something promulgated by the likes of Henry Ford, and it was strongly associated with a popular slogan widely used in the 1920s: "America First".

Q: To what extent were the Roaring Twenties the product of World War I?

A: It's important to remember that World War I did not last as long for the US as it did for European nations: the Americans entered the war in 1917 and ended with everyone else in 1918. This was the major difference between America and Britain in the 1920s. The US hadn't experienced the same cataclysm of war, which had seen a generation of young men wiped out. Instead, the generational rupture – its cultural trauma, if you like – had been the American Civil War (1861–65), which had involved grandparents of those alive in the 1920s.

That being said, World War I was viewed as more of a proximate cause for the huge changes in the 1920s than the Spanish Flu pandemic. That raises the question: would other factors have created those changes seen during the Roaring Twenties anyway?

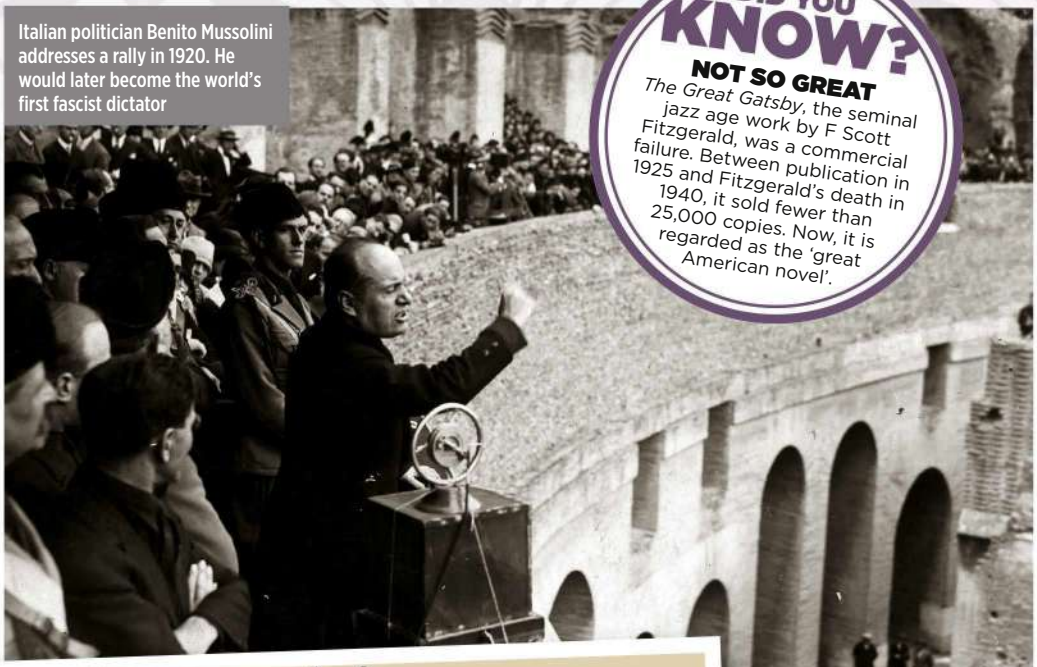
The decade saw the emergence of American society as we would recognise it today. It was dominated by consumer and corporate capitalism and driven by technological advances. It was an era of tension between labour and capital, of growing inequality and growing anger about that inequality.

But it was also an era in which people enjoyed new kinds of mass entertainment – cinema, radio and magazine culture, for instance – and the culture they all brought together was youth-oriented. The 1920s feel like a youthful time, so all those changes could have helped create that feeling of a 'roaring' decade, regardless of whether World War I had happened or not.

INTERVIEW: EMILY BRIFFETT

SARAH CHURCHWELL is a professor of American literature and chair of public understanding of the humanities at the School of Advanced Study, University of London

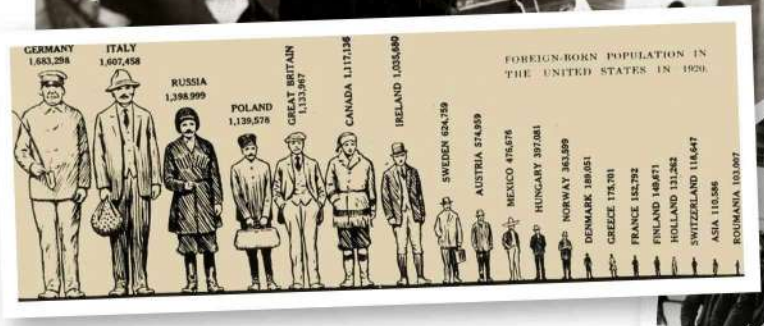
Italian politician Benito Mussolini addresses a rally in 1920. He would later become the world's first fascist dictator



DID YOU KNOW?

NOT SO GREAT

The Great Gatsby, the seminal jazz age work by F Scott Fitzgerald, was a commercial failure. Between publication in 1925 and Fitzgerald's death in 1940, it sold fewer than 25,000 copies. Now, it is regarded as the 'great American novel'.



ABOVE: **An illustration showing the foreign-born population of the US in 1920. Isolationist beliefs led to the introduction of the country's first major racial quotas**

RIGHT: **European immigrants arrive at Ellis Island, 1920. Not all new arrivals were treated to a warm welcome, however**

This scene from the 1924 film *Three Weeks* shows the 1920s at its most 'roaring' – for the middle and upper classes, at least

London's Piccadilly Circus pictured in the 1920s – a decade in Britain's history that is the subject of much mythology, says Professor Matt Houlbrook

AN END TO THE 'LONG WEEKEND'

Professor Matt Houlbrook explains why, in Britain, the 1920s was much more than a time of flappers and frivolity

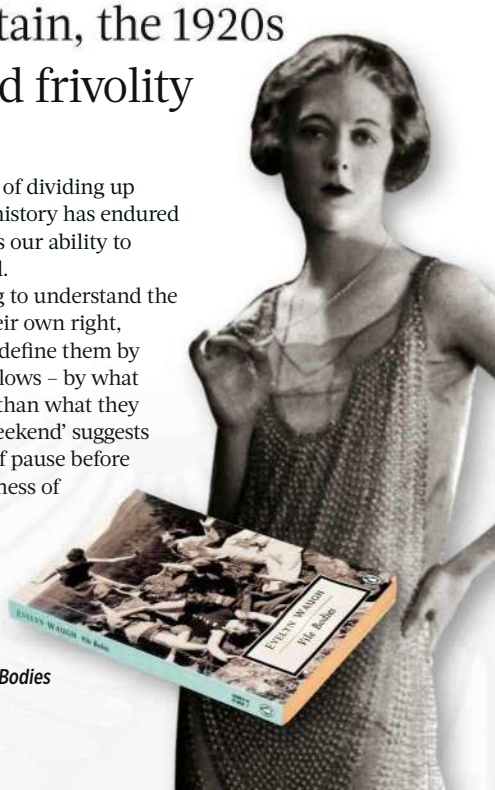
These are interesting times to be a historian of 1920s Britain. As we move through a decade of centenaries, the instinct to look back, rather than forward, has been striking. Last year's launch of the 1921 Census online prompted a flurry of exhibitions and newspaper stories to mark the occasion, while in early 2020, headline writers were heralding the start of a new 'Roaring Twenties' and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra was inviting us to "party like it's 1929". As of 2023, the 'jazzing flapper' and peak-capped 'Peaky Blinder' remain the fancy dress costumes du jour. More than a century after the decade began, the 1920s are back in fashion.

The 1920s might be everywhere, but so too are the myths that govern how we think about the decade. Lazy clichés of the 'Roaring Twenties' make it impossible for us to see how this period was a far-reaching moment in the making of modern Britain. A century on, the vagaries of popular memory mean we have lost sight of the postwar decade's character and significance.

A BRIEF PAUSE?

The 1920s is usually treated as part of the longer period 'between the wars', famously described as "The Long Week-End" by Robert Graves and Alan Hodge in their classic work of social history bearing the same name. Graves and Hodge's book was first published in 1940, but their way of dividing up 20th-century British history has endured – and ultimately limits our ability to understand the period.

Rather than seeking to understand the 1920s and 1930s in their own right, there is a tendency to define them by what precedes and follows – by what they were *not*, rather than what they were. The idea of a 'weekend' suggests this decade was a brief pause before the more serious business of



Elizabeth Ponsonby was a member of the 'Bright Young Things' who dominated the tabloid press – a group satirised by Evelyn Waugh's novel *Vile Bodies*

GETTY IMAGES X3, ALAMY X4

The experiences of the upper-class characters in *Downton Abbey* are not representative of the experiences of real-life interwar Britons as a whole

war was inevitably resumed. Shaped by hindsight unavailable at the time, such assumptions draw attention away from the period itself. Emphasising the similarities between the 1920s and 1930s also means we lose sight of what made each decade unique. The tensions between the legacies of war and the accelerating pace of peacetime change meant the aftermath was a distinctive historical period. Ingrained habits of thinking about that period 'between the wars' efface the significance of the 1920s.

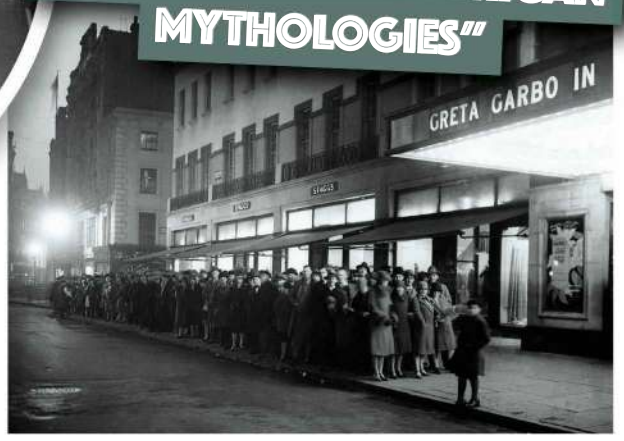
Ideas of the 'long weekend' give the 1920s that enticing mood of frivolity, fun and escape that make the period so popular. Alluring as the sound of jazz and sight of the Charleston might be, these powerful images conceal more complex realities. Ideas of the so-called Roaring Twenties evoke the spectacle of the decadent and aristocratic high society of London and the English country house: the glamorous yet doomed Elizabeth Ponsonby; Noël Coward singing "dance, dance, dance little lady"; satirical novels of the 'Bright Young Things' like Evelyn Waugh's *Vile Bodies* (1930).

It might be clear that the world of Waugh and Ponsonby was far removed from that of ordinary Britons, but their reputation exerts enduring influence on how we think about the decade as a whole. *Downton Abbey* has much to answer for.

AMERICAN FLAVOUR

As the ubiquity of *Great Gatsby*-style parties suggests, how we think about 1920s Britain has also been remarkably dominated by images taken from elsewhere. Roaring Twenties Britain takes colour and form from vignettes, characters and motifs that are distinctly American: F Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald; prohibition and speakeasies; gangsters' molls and Al Capone – the images have merged and made it difficult to disentangle British realities from American mythologies.

"IT HAS BECOME DIFFICULT TO DISENTANGLE BRITISH REALITIES FROM AMERICAN MYTHOLOGIES"



It is true that the growing pace of global communications meant everyday life underwent a very real process of Americanisation. US corporations dominated British consumer culture, while US films, music, dances, fashions and chain stores like Woolworths were popular among ordinary men and women: a young working-class woman might want to be "as glorious as [American actor] Theda Bara". Focusing on these stereotypical images, however, means we have lost sight of what made Britain's experience of the 1920s unique.

The myth of the Roaring Twenties, then, is symptomatic of a bigger problem in how we understand the period. After the Great War, just as Britons tried to come to terms with the loss of a generation, rapid and often unnerving social and cultural and economic changes marked what the journalist Thomas Burke called "our welcome to the new century". It was in the 1920s that modern Britain came into being.

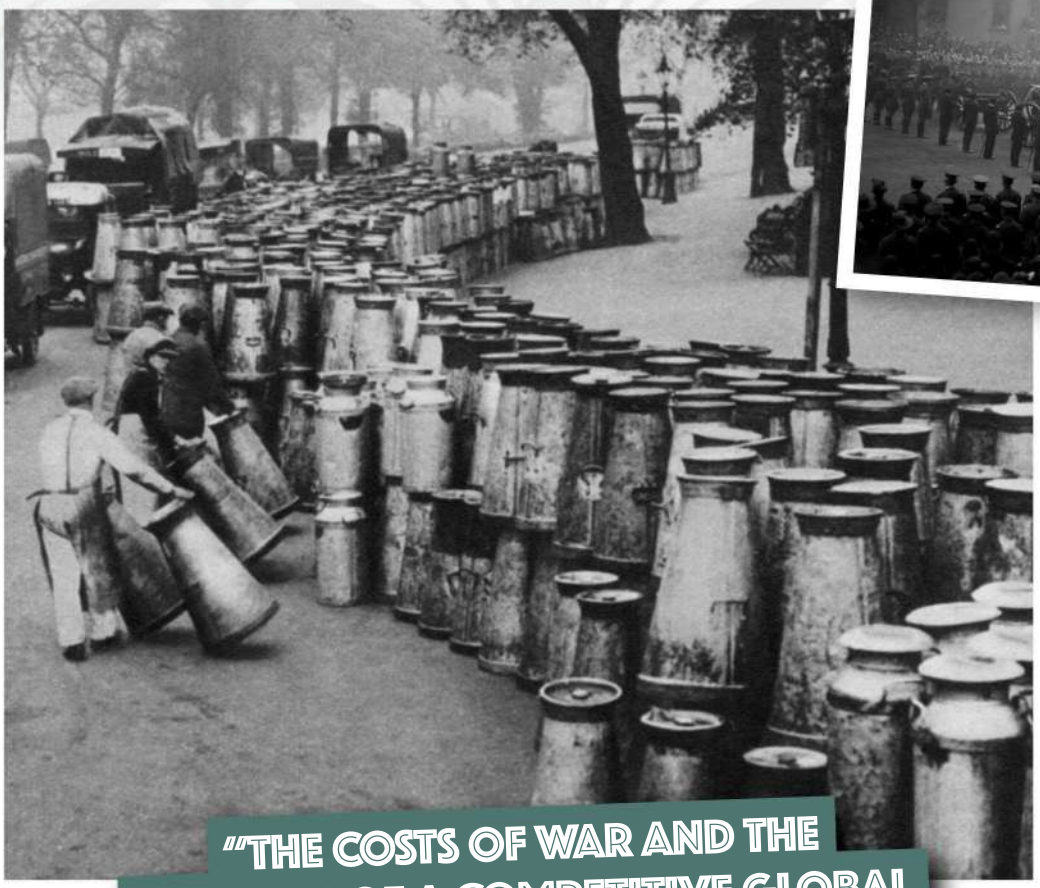
What changed? After the Representation of the People Act of 1918, Britain became a mass democracy. Extending the vote to working-class men and women had political effects: it made public opinion of pressing importance and prompted politicians, bureaucrats and scientists to seek new ways of ensuring the wellbeing of ordinary Britons. Often unsuccessful at the time, these impulses nonetheless established the conditions for the development of the welfare state in the years after 1945.

Political reform also had cultural consequences. The extension of the franchise prompted anxious reflection on the influence of the media and consumer culture that anticipated recent scandals over the power of the press. Those debates mattered because the 1920s also witnessed the spectacular growth of a commercial culture that still looks remarkably familiar: the cinema, bestselling romantic novel, personal journalism and a new celebrity culture all reflected the affluence enjoyed by at least some Britons.

TOP: **A flapper girl dances in a scene from the 1949 adaption of F Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby*. Despite being distinctly American, the book has had shaped how Britons view the 1920s**

ABOVE LEFT: **American silent film actor Theda Bara was a hit with audiences on both sides of the Atlantic**

ABOVE RIGHT: **A crowd of Londoners queue outside the Empire Cinema in Leicester Square to watch 1929's *Wild Orchids*, starring Greta Garbo**



"THE COSTS OF WAR AND THE VAGARIES OF A COMPETITIVE GLOBAL ECONOMY WERE SOON FELT ACROSS THE 'OLD' INDUSTRIAL REGIONS"

ABOVE LEFT: **An emergency milk depot set up in London's Hyde Park during the 1926 General Strike. The strike lasted for nine days, but failed to secure better pay and conditions for workers**

ABOVE RIGHT: **King George V unveils the newly erected Cenotaph in Whitehall, London, 1920. The destruction wrought by World War I would go on to shape the subsequent decade**

◀ The 'sex appeal' of the Hollywood star, moreover, was just the most visible aspect of a striking liberalisation of sexual attitudes and behaviour that reflected both young women's changing horizons and progressive challenges to conventional moral codes. In the 1920s women gained more personal freedom; rising real wages for those in work reinvigorated consumer culture and provided new leisure opportunities; the world of chain stores, cinemas and dance halls expanded. The flapper dominates our image of the Roaring Twenties because she was of vital importance to contemporary culture, and because new technologies of photography, cinema and newsreels ensured she remains visible today.

A WARTIME LEGACY

There were more troubling tensions behind this glossy veneer, however. Throughout the 1920s, the legacies of the Great War were inescapable. The war's ongoing demands were partly about the process of remembering and memorialising the dead, providing for the physical and psychological needs of the traumatised living, and understanding the war through novels and autobiographies. Yet the rituals of Armistice Day were only the most visible traces of a conflict whose impress was everywhere. Pervasive and insistent, war lived on in anxious discussions of what it meant to be British and modern, and in powerful images of the 1920s as a traumatised and unnerved world.

Not all Britons shared in the profits and possibilities of peace. Despite a brief boom after the Armistice, the costs of war and the vagaries of a competitive global economy were soon felt across the 'old' industrial regions of south Wales, northern England and Scotland. As early as autumn 1922 a social survey identified *The Third Winter of Employment*. This report proved a prescient recognition of the enduring social problems that defined the period for many. The conditions it described also underpinned the bitter industrial conflicts that coalesced in the General Strike in 1926, and the emergence of a radical politics that demanded the profits of peace be shared among the many, not the few. A growing regional divide coalesced in the idea of the 'two nations' – a declining industrial north set in sharp contrast to the burgeoning consumerism of London and the southeast.

Fixating on the United States, finally, draws attention away from other – equally vital and important – global influences on 1920s British culture. Europe mattered, of course. Perhaps most significant was Britain's global empire. Far from distant or marginal, empire was intrinsic to everyday life. It was studied at school, read about in newspapers, seen in newsreels and films, and witnessed in the packets of tea sold in shops. It created an increasingly cosmopolitan population, particularly in ports like Liverpool, Cardiff and Glasgow. It shaped how Britons understood the world and their nation's place in it.

Empire also had a darker side: racial tensions and violence would be a recurrent feature of the 1920s, as the ideas of white superiority on which Britain's power rested fuelled the popular racism and political interventions that made life so difficult for black or Asian Britons. All of this meant that it required – and still requires – remarkable cultural amnesia to portray 1920s Britain as stable, let alone characterised by hedonism and frivolity.

COCKTAILS AND CRASHES

Let's take the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra's 'Sounds of the 1920s' concert, held at the Birmingham Symphony Hall in February 2020. The event was apparently a homage to "the decade of flappers, cocktails and the Charleston, when the whole world danced to the wild new rhythms of jazz" and when "songwriters from Gershwin to Irving Berlin created some of the most intoxicating songs of the new century: 'Fascinatin' Rhythm', 'The Man I Love', 'Let's Do It', 'Mack the Knife'." Amusingly, the promotional text concluded with the line, "Kick up your heels and let's party like it's 1929."

GETTY IMAGES X6, ALAMY X2

American songs and American songwriters – here is the myth of the hedonistic Roaring Twenties writ small. The nod to Prince is a neat touch, but we would do well to remember that 1929 was also the year of the Wall Street Crash, and an economic crisis that rippled across the world.

In Britain, that same year, Ramsay MacDonald's Labour government came to power after the first election in which the 'flapper vote' became a feature of political life. Women over 30 had gained the vote in 1918. It was only in July 1928, however, that women were enfranchised on the same terms as men and could vote from the age of 21. The Equal Franchise Act drew a line under the progressive advances in women's social and political position triggered by the Great War.

In January 1929, finally, RC Sherriff's most famous play *Journey's End* began its sell-out public run in London's West End. Set in an officer's dugout in France in the days leading up to a raid on the German trenches, *Journey's End* encapsulates what we now think of as the literature of the Great War. It is an uncompromising study of the war's futility, horror and psychological stresses. The transfer of Sherriff's play in the same year as Erich Maria Remarque's classic anti-war novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* was first published in English marked the point at which a new literature of disillusionment began to take hold in the public imagination. The ways in which Britons thought about the Great War slowly began to change.

There is little sign that the Roaring Twenties are losing their hold on the public imagination – far from it. Only in the past few years has one of the UK's largest online fancy dress shops added a recognisably British costume to its section on the 1920s. The 'peaked cap gangster' costume is striking evidence of how the remarkable success of BBC One's *Peaky Blinders* has transformed how we think about postwar Britain. It remains only a partial version of the 1920s, however, and the depressing spectacle of fedoras and fancy dress garments such as the 'Charleston red flapper dress' dominates.

Another absence: the range of costumes touted by the same online shop covers every decade from the 1920s through to the 1990s with one notable exception. It seems partygoers don't find the 'Hungry Thirties' the most appealing theme for fancy dress, and the Jarrow marcher 'look' still isn't back in fashion.

Overall, it's important to think critically about the clichés and shorthand labels we fall back on when trying to understand the past. Charleston parties and flapper costumes may seem like harmless fun – but they carry the most powerful myths about Britain after the Great War. The resilience of these myths mean that we misunderstand 1920s society and culture, and the decade's significance in the making of modern Britain.

Our obsession with glamour and hedonism distracts from equally compelling experiences of austerity, trauma and conflict; the blaring jazz saxophone drowns out the emergence of radical new ideas for living and for organising society and politics. The spectacle of the Roaring Twenties turns our attention from the decade's importance as the moment when modern Britain came into being.

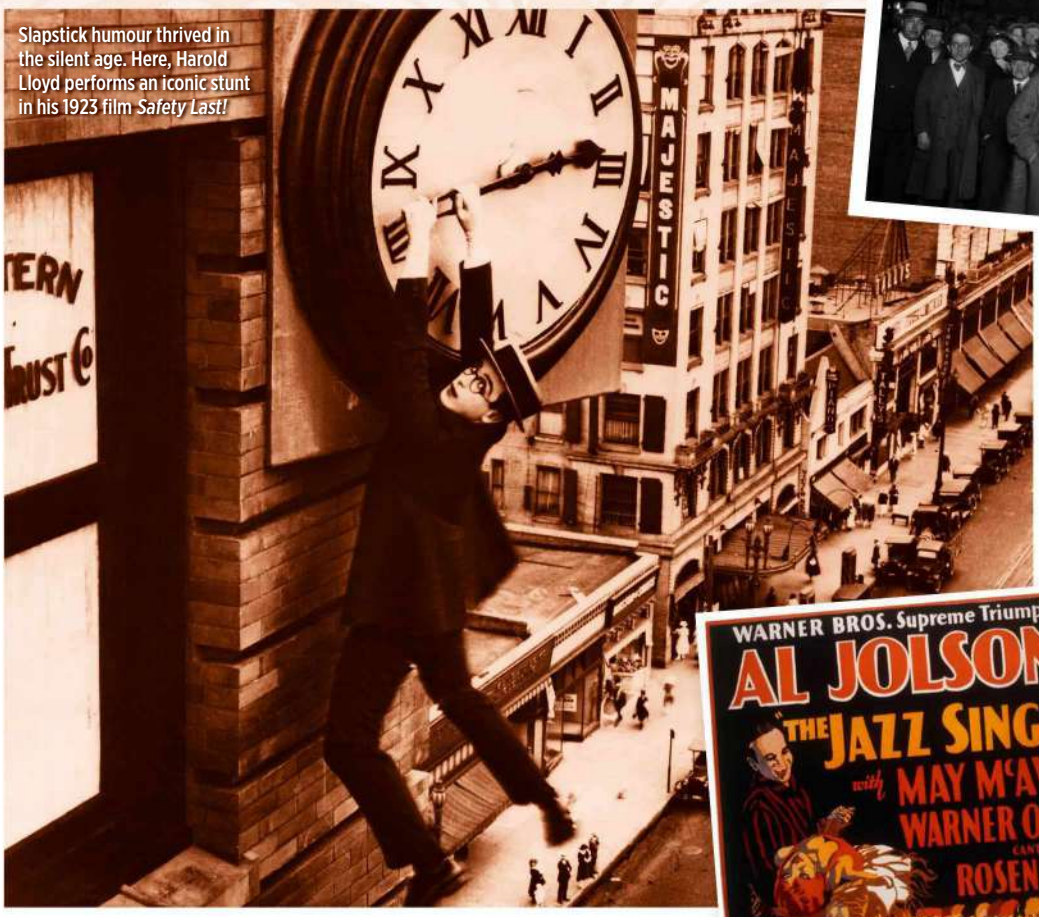
A woman casts her vote in the 1918 general election. It would be another 10 years, however, before true universal suffrage was achieved

ABOVE: **RC Sheriff's play *Journey's End* was based on his own experiences of serving as a wartime officer**

RIGHT: **A programme from the play's original 1929 run**

American dancer Bee Jackson performs the Charleston with the bell boys of a London hotel. The dance has become synonymous with the 1920s

MATT HOULBROOK is a professor of cultural history at the University of Birmingham. His latest book about the 1920s and 1930s is ***Prince of Tricksters: The Incredible True Story of Netley Lucas, Gentleman Crook*** (University of Chicago Press, 2016)



Slapstick humour thrived in the silent age. Here, Harold Lloyd performs an iconic stunt in his 1923 film *Safety Last!*

TOP: **Crowds gather for the premiere of the 1927 silent drama *Love* – one of MGM's biggest hits of that year**

BOTTOM: **Married movie stars Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks send a wireless message to fans in 1921**

LEFT: **Al Jolson's *The Jazz Singer*, released in 1927, was the first feature-length picture to boast synchronised music and dialogue**

NOW WE'RE TALKING

An innovative new technology would end up transforming a Los Angeles suburb into the movie capital of the world

Hollywood didn't invent the movies. But during the early decades of the 20th century, American filmmakers relocated from various parts of the country – New York City, Chicago, New Jersey – to California, where the industry operated in a more centralised way. The 1920s in particular would be a decade of revolution, one that made a quiet Los Angeles suburb the global capital of the movie world. It's not lost that status over the 100 years since.

Although a couple of notable studios – Fox and Paramount – had been in operation since before World War I, the 1920s saw the formation of many more companies, including Warner Bros, MGM, Columbia and RKO. Each would have its own rosters of actors signed exclusively to the studio's productions and the likes of Harold Lloyd, Norma Shearer, Mary Pickford and her husband Douglas Fairbanks became household names not only across the US but on the other side of the Atlantic too.

The rapid building of Hollywood's reputation also prompted something of a European brain-drain to southern California, with the cream of the continent's acting talent, among them Greta Garbo from Sweden, heading west. German directors such as Ernst Lubitsch also made the move, co-opted by a rapacious industry in the first irresistible flush of adolescence. The cotton was growing high.

GETTING IN SYNC

By the mid-1920s, 50 million Americans were making a weekly pilgrimage to their local cinema. These establishments were largely independently owned, until, that is, cinema chains began to buy them up. These companies were blessed with the ready capital to convert them into movie theatres with the technology to play the 'talkies'.

Hollywood had been a little slow to convert itself to talking pictures, willing to wait until the arrival of the appropriate means to seamlessly sync film with speech. This arrived in the latter half of

GETTY IMAGES X8

the 1920s, with one movie in particular, Al Jolson's *The Jazz Singer*, blazing the trail for cinema's next chapter.

As well as deepening the filmgoing experience, the talkies introduced many Americans to their country's different accents, to voices that cinema patrons, with little or no experience of travel beyond their own state line, may not have heard before; perhaps the tough-talking Bronx accent or the slow Southern drawl. The advent of dialogue meant the evolution of more involved plotlines and deeper character development. The difference was also felt in more lighthearted films, where quick quippery now received as many laughs as physical comedy.

Audiences flocked to the talkies. By the end of the decade, just before the Wall Street Crash started emptying cinemas, business was booming. An average of 110 million Americans were now making that weekly pilgrimage to their nearest big screen.

CODE COMPLIANCE

During the 1920s, directors had made hay, largely free to make whatever kinds of films they fancied making. But political and religious pressure towards establishing a self-regulated, self-censored industry was gathering momentum. While recommendations about adult and blasphemous material were made to the studios by the authorities, it wasn't until the Motion Picture Production Code – more popularly known as the Hays Code – began to be strictly enforced in 1934 that filmmakers fell into line.

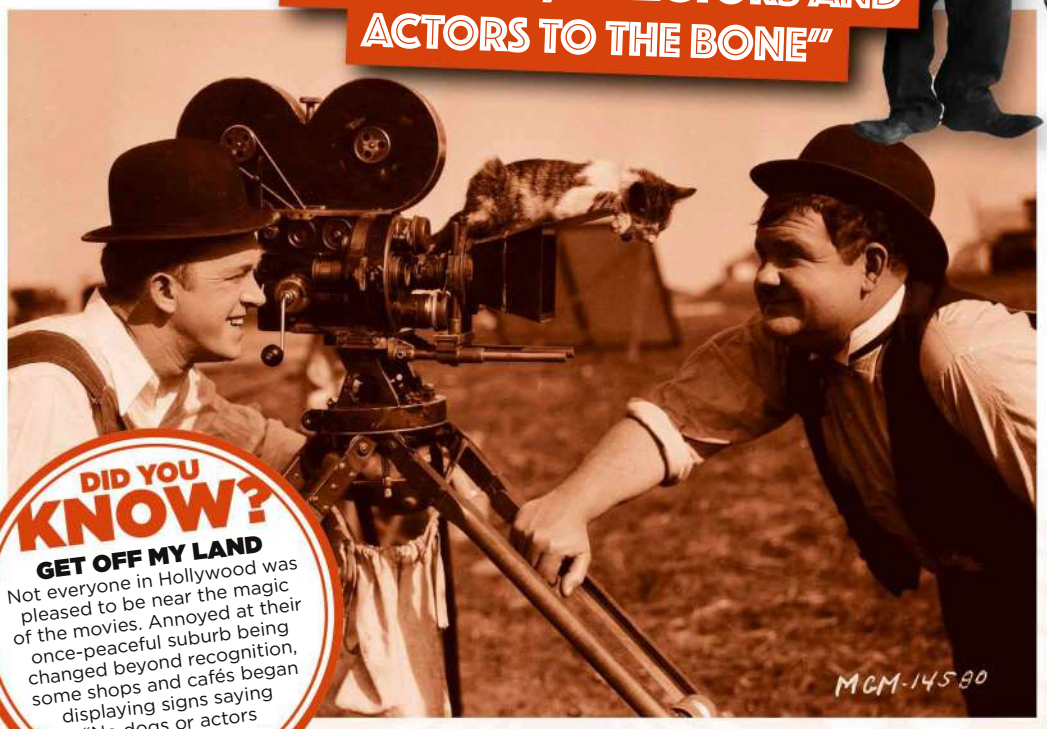
The code dictated what could and couldn't be portrayed on screen. For instance, homosexuality could not be shown (or even hinted at), nor could an interracial romantic relationship. The code wheeled into position a backdrop of 'wholesome', traditional values, with directors no longer indulging themselves in the limitlessness of the medium.

The Hollywood conveyor belt had moved at a dizzying pace during the 1920s, its levels of productivity akin to those of Henry Ford's car factories. The studio system worked its writers, directors and actors to the bone; the latter might have to appear in up to two dozen movies a year, such were the demanding contracts they signed. It's perhaps no surprise, then, to learn of the ways that the stars of the day chose to relax off-screen, with stories of drug scandals and wild orgies abounding around Tinseltown. While prohibition kept ordinary folk in some kind of social austerity, the Hollywood elite were given the keys to lives of excess and indulgence.

ABOVE: **Clara Bow, star of the 1927 film *It*, poses with a personalised licence plate. Her fame resulted in the term 'it girl' entering the popular lexicon**

LEFT: **Movie megastar Charlie Chaplin resisted the lure of making talking pictures until World War II**

"THE STUDIO SYSTEM WORKED ITS WRITERS, DIRECTORS AND ACTORS TO THE BONE"



Stan Laurel (*left*) and Oliver Hardy (*right*) entertain a cat on the set of their 1928 silent short film *The Finishing Touch*. The duo released their first talking picture the following year

DID YOU KNOW?

GET OFF MY LAND

Not everyone in Hollywood was pleased to be near the magic of the movies. Annoyed at their once-peaceful suburb being changed beyond recognition, some shops and cafés began displaying signs saying "No dogs or actors allowed".

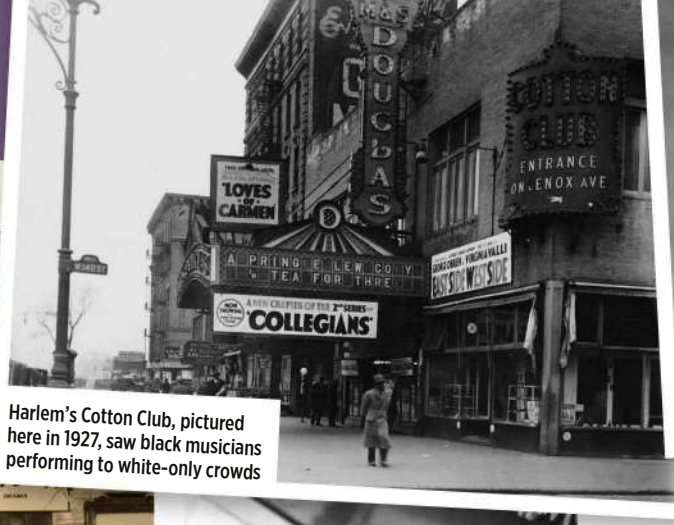
Many studios employed fixers to contain and dissolve any scandals involving their stars and thus maintain their squeaky-clean public image. Actors unable to escape the taint of scandal – such as the original 'it girl' Clara Bow and the murder suspect 'Fatty' Arbuckle – had their contracts cancelled before they faded into obscurity. 'Moral turpitude clauses', allowing studios to ditch their stars in the event of unbecoming behaviour, were increasingly written into contracts.

Several stars of the silent era were unsuccessful in making the transition to the world of the talkies. Most famously, arguably the greatest silent movie star, Charlie Chaplin, for a long time resisted taking on speaking parts and continued to make dialogue-free films until 1940's *The Great Dictator*. In contrast, his comedic contemporaries Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy seamlessly crossed over into this new era of cinema, the dialogue between the hapless pair further enhancing their craft.

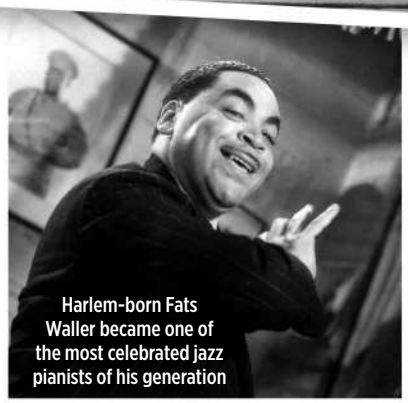
Scandals aside, the 1920s were modern cinema's formative years, when technological advances truly revolutionised the form. The future stretched out in front of Hollywood, as the most famous line in Al Jolson's *The Jazz Singer* announced. "Wait a minute! Wait a minute! You ain't heard nothin' yet..." ⊙

WORDS: NIGE TASSELL

Crowds gather outside Harlem's Lafayette Theater in 1929 – six years after Duke Ellington made his New York City debut at the venue



Harlem's Cotton Club, pictured here in 1927, saw black musicians performing to white-only crowds



Harlem-born Fats Waller became one of the most celebrated jazz pianists of his generation

A NEW YORK STATE OF MIND

The Roaring Twenties witnessed an explosion of African-American art, music and literature – and Harlem was at the epicentre

Music, literature, art, theatre, dance, fashion… Between the turn of the 1920s and the mid-1930s, the Harlem Renaissance had it all. It was an outpouring of African-American artistic endeavour, a golden age where black culture would make an indelible impression both nationally and internationally – and all from a certain neighbourhood in upper Manhattan.

In 1925, the influential writer Alain Locke compiled an anthology of African-American writings entitled *The New Negro*. The book was simultaneously a statement of intent and a reflection of Harlem's cultural output. In one of his contributions to its pages, Locke emphasised how this renaissance, this revival, was grounded in the concept of self-expression. It was both "a spiritual emancipation" and "a spiritual Coming of Age", offering African-American artists "the realisation of the unwisdom of allowing social discrimination to segregate [them] mentally".

NIGHTS AT THE SAVOY

The Harlem Renaissance enjoyed its own soundtrack: jazz. It was the pulse, the heartbeat, of the neighbourhood, the rhythm to which Harlem swung. Curious white Manhattanites were drawn to its clubs and speakeasies, seduced by the music of Fats Waller or Cab Calloway or Count Basie. One of the main crucibles for jazz was the Savoy Ballroom on Lenox Avenue, a block-long venue that could accommodate as many as 4,000 revellers. After opening in 1926, this glamorous nightspot soon became the prime destination for both Harlem's own jazz community and touring African-American musicians. Intrigued white New Yorkers ventured north of Central Park, too.

The likes of Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong also performed at the nearby Cotton Club, a whites-only establishment where the clientele didn't mix with the performers. Musical revues were the Cotton Club's staple, the ever-popular format which would migrate south to Broadway to find less adventurous white audiences nervous about travelling to Harlem. The African-American dancer Josephine Baker appeared on Broadway in productions such as *Shuffle Along* and *The Chocolate Dandies* before becoming a huge global star.

Before finding fame in France, Josephine Baker performed in New York City at the height of the Harlem Renaissance

LITERARY AWAKENINGS

If jazz was Harlem's soundtrack, its look – its "visual signature", according to one critic – was the art of Aaron Douglas, a painter working at the convergence of Art Deco and Cubism who also incorporated a discernible African influence in his work. Black visual artists were denied entry to and exposure in Manhattan's existing art world and the renaissance confidently shone a light on, notably, the sculpture of Augusta Savage and the street photography and portraiture of James Van Der Zee.

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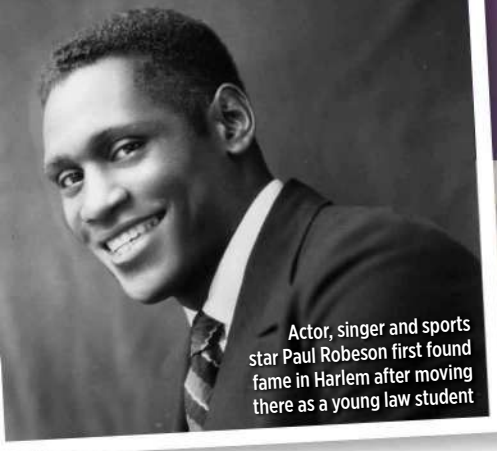


Actor, singer and sports star Paul Robeson first found fame in Harlem after moving there as a young law student

It was also a literary awakening for a brigade of young African-American writers, many of whom came to prominence in the pages of the seminal black publications *Opportunity* and *FIRE!!*. Although publishing just one issue, the latter was a particularly significant literary magazine, showcasing the work of titans-in-waiting Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston to the city's white publishing elite.

These publishers and editors also had their heads turned by Jessie Redmon Fauset's *There is Confusion*, a 1924 novel which, in exploring the idea of how white American culture could be transformed by exposure to African-American artistic expression, showed a Jane Austen-like grasp of social interaction. The book's launch party brought black writers and white publishing executives together in the same room. The doors to traditional publishing were opening.

Along with fiction, Harlem boasted a fertile poetry scene, spearheaded by Countée Cullen, the recipient of a Guggenheim fellowship. Playwrights like Willis Richardson also prospered, their plays offering the chance for black actors – the most notable of whom was surely Paul Robeson – to appear in serious drama rather than low-rent minstrel shows. Companies such as the Harlem Experimental Theater and the Krigwa Players were in high demand.

As brilliant and dynamic as it was, ultimately this wave of cultural rebirth couldn't last. The Wall Street Crash and the resulting Great Depression took their obvious toll, as did the lifting of prohibition laws in 1933, meaning white New Yorkers no longer needed to venture into Harlem for refreshment. Two years later, the neighbourhood burned orange with the break-out of race riots.

Although these external events would dictate that the Harlem Renaissance would fade and fizzle out, African-American culture would never be the same again, saying it loud that it was black and it was proud. As Langston Hughes wrote back in 1926, "we younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased, we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful." ⊙

WORDS: NIGE TASSELL

YOUNG, GIFTED AND BLACK

A closer look at four luminaries who shaped the Harlem Renaissance

DUKE ELLINGTON

▶ The holder of a residency at the Cotton Club, composer and bandleader Ellington was a seminal figure in jazz, often incorporating the street sounds of Harlem in the 1,000-plus compositions he wrote in a sterling career.

ZORA NEALE HURSTON

◀ One of the co-founders of the strident literary magazine *FIRE!!*, Hurston was a key figure of the Harlem Renaissance and an astute chronicler of the African-American woman's condition – even if she didn't receive due acclaim during her lifetime.

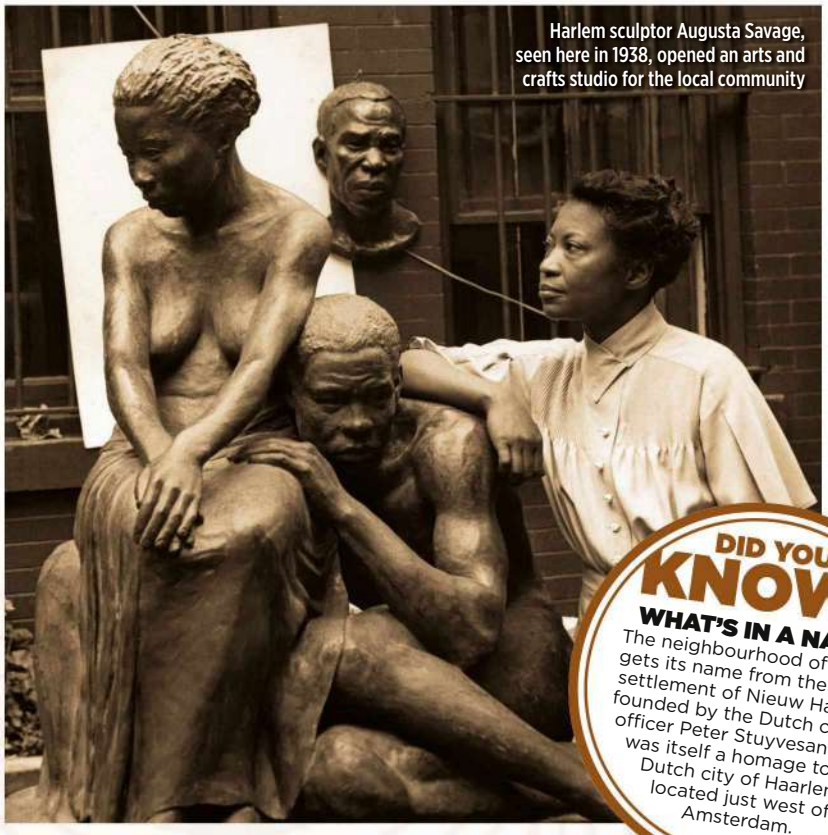
AARON DOUGLAS

▶ Originally from Kansas, Douglas was the Harlem Renaissance's pre-eminent painter, an artist whose bold, geometric creations drew both from Cubism and from Africa, bringing the continent into the international avant-garde.

BESSIE SMITH

▼ Orphaned at a young age, Smith came to later rejoice in the nickname of 'Empress of the Blues' thanks to her astonishing voice and the fearless way her songs stressed a black woman's right to independence and self-determination.

Singer Bessie Smith rose from humble origins in Tennessee to become the highest-paid black performer of the late 1920s



Harlem sculptor Augusta Savage, seen here in 1938, opened an arts and crafts studio for the local community

DID YOU KNOW?

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The neighbourhood of Harlem gets its name from the former settlement of Nieuw Haarlem, founded by the Dutch colonial officer Peter Stuyvesant. This was itself a homage to the Dutch city of Haarlem, located just west of Amsterdam.

BENEATH THE GLITZ AND GLAMOUR

The 1920s has often been characterised as a decade of decadence – but this rose-tinted portrait hides a darker underbelly, filled with stories of crime and injustice

THE ECONOMY

If you look at the barest of bones, it appears that the US enjoyed enormous economic progress during the 1920s, with the national wealth more than doubling during the decade. Thanks to the Fordney-McCumber Tariff Act of 1922, hefty taxes were applied to foreign imports, encouraging consumers to "buy American", which resulted in buoyant times for domestic companies – and for businesses offering personal credit.

Mass production accelerated – most notably in the automotive industry, but also in the manufacture of electrical items and white goods – meaning there was an abundance of factory jobs, which in turn prompted mass migration to cities. Growing car ownership also fuelled the oil industry to greater riches, along with associated industries such as gas stations, motels and diners.

However, this consumerist wave came at a price. Production of household goods and the like outstripped domestic demand and the tariff wars often resulted in either manufacturing surpluses or the reduction of prices to unsustainable levels. This translated to workers being laid off and unemployment becoming rampant. Mechanisation had its effect in the fields, too, where – again – over-production and declining demand plunged many workers into unemployment and deep poverty.

Although offering plenty of rewards to shareholding individuals, the American economy was actually decidedly fragile. Seemingly prosperous stock-market speculators became nervous that the cotton had grown as high as it would get and withdrew their investments en masse, causing the Wall Street Crash of 1929. The US would roar no more, at least not until beyond the subsequent decade of depression and decline.

By contrast, the 1920s weren't a buoyant time for the UK economy. Saddled with the heavy cost of a four-year world war, in 1920 the country fell into a deep and lasting recession, from which it took many years to recover. Indeed, by the first quarter of 1930, GDP was only 16 per cent higher than it had been 10 years earlier. Further economic turmoil arrived when the effects of the Wall Street Crash began to lap on British shores.

RIGHT: The US Tariff Committee, seen here in c1922, oversaw the creation of the protectionist Fordney-McCumber Act

BROOKLYN DAILY EAGLE
And Complete Long Island News
NEW YORK CITY, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 24, 1929
WALL ST. IN PANIC AS STOCKS CRASH
Attempt Made to Kill Italy's Crown Prince
ASSASSIN CAUGHT IN BRUSSELS MOB; PRINCE UNHURT
Hollywood Fire Destroys Films Worth Millions
FEAR 52 PERISHED IN LAKE MICHIGAN FERRY IS MISSING
PIECE OF PLANE LIKE DITEMAN'S IS FOUND AT SEA
High Duty Group Gave $700,000 to Coolidge Drive
STOCKS CRASH IN RUSH TO SELL; BILLIONS LOST
CARNEGIE CHARGE OF PAID ATHLETES
HOOVER'S TRAIN HALTED BY AUTO
WARDER SOUGHT TO KEEP SEA TRIP SECRET, AID SAYS
SOMERS NAMED AS HEAD OF NEW EXCHANGE BANK

BELOW: The front page of the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* on 24 October 1929 – a day that would become known as 'Black Thursday'

GETTY IMAGES X6, ALAMY X1

Sardine packers in San Diego, 1920. While unemployment generally remained low for much of the decade, many people were underpaid and made to work in appalling conditions

PROHIBITION

For the strata of the British population that was largely insulated from the country's economic instabilities, the 1920s were a giddy time socially, with the wealthier classes frequenting jazz clubs and cocktail bars in great number. For them, the good times rolled and the drink flowed.

Across the Atlantic, social lives weren't so well lubricated – at least not publicly. Extensive political lobbying was carried out by the exceedingly influential temperance movement, represented by such groups as the Prohibition Party and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union; the latter's aim involved "transforming by the power of Divine grace those who are enslaved by alcohol". So great was the movement's influence that, in 1917, the Eighteenth Amendment was passed by Congress and ratified in 1919. It declared that "after one year from the ratification of this article the manufacture, sale or transportation of intoxicating liquors within, the importation thereof into, or the exportation thereof from the United States and all territory subject to the jurisdiction thereof for beverage purposes is hereby prohibited".

But many Americans refused to embrace this doctrine of abstinence and sobriety, and the illegal manufacture, sale and transportation of alcohol took off, giving rise to speakeasies (secret drinking dens) and bootleggers (people who distributed the booze).

Evading the laws of prohibition became big business, with great quantities of imported alcohol still entering the country by sea from the Caribbean, or 'rum-runners' crossing the inland borders with Canada and Mexico. The money that could be made in this illegal trade attracted the attention of organised crime and bootlegging became the foundation of some of the country's most notorious, most ruthless gangs. Only when prohibition was repealed by the Twenty-First Amendment in 1933 did the illegal trade end.

LEFT: **An anti-prohibition march in Newark, New Jersey, 1931. By then, the alcohol ban had already been in place for more than a decade**

BELOW: **New York City policemen oversee the disposal of a barrel of liquor into a sewer, 1921**

ABOVE: **The Chandler Motor Car Company factory in Ohio, c1920. The firm was one of many to capitalise on the US automobile boom**

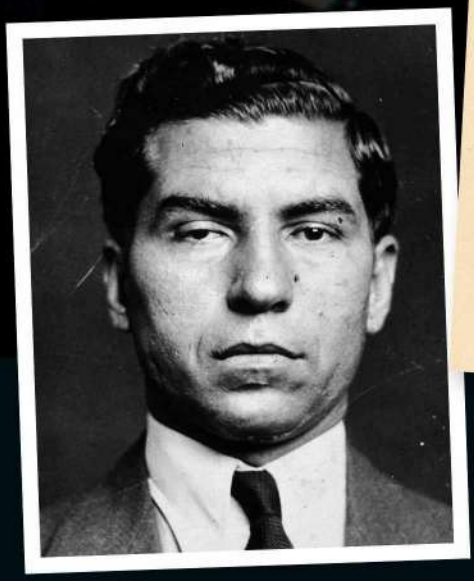
LEFT: **A speculator attempts to sell his car after losing his money in the Wall Street Crash**

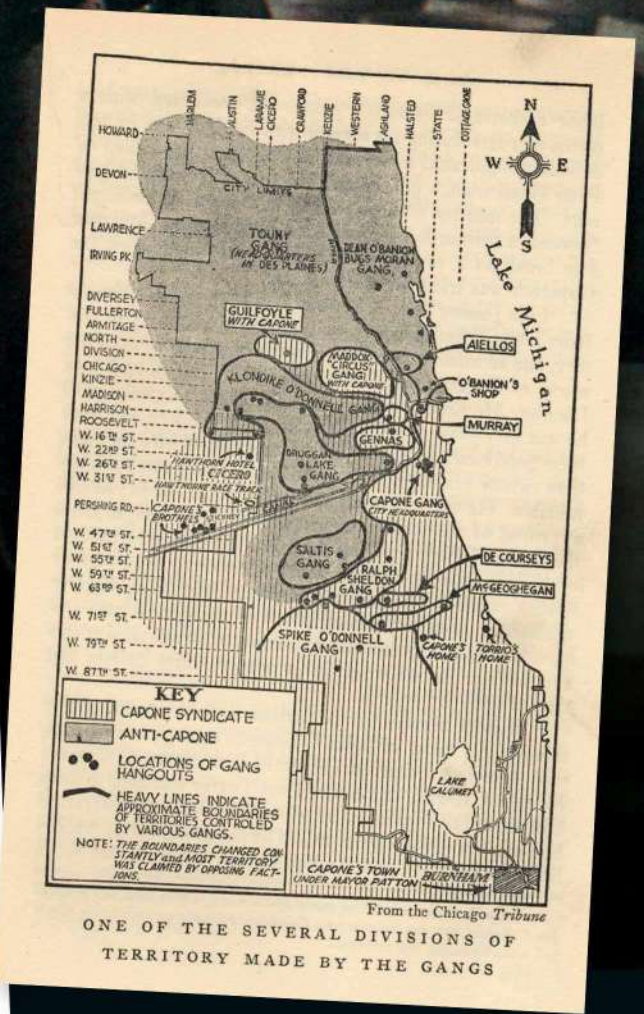
ORGANISED CRIME

Circumventing US prohibition laws was far from all that organised crime was engaged in during the 1920s, but it was the basis of these burgeoning criminal empires. Previously, crime had been largely restricted to the immediate locality, with street gangs having limited influence beyond their neighbourhoods. But the financial bounties achievable through bootlegging meant ambitious criminals had to employ accountants and lawyers to protect their earnings and assets. In short, crime became organised.

Sometimes gangs were sufficiently savvy and recognised the benefits of cooperating with rival outfits in their shared home city to ward off mobsters from out of town muscling in on their territory. See here the conciliatory tactics of 'Lucky' Luciano in New York City. Other times, vicious and bloody turf wars broke out. The St Valentine's Day Massacre, in Chicago in 1929, was one such affair – the slaughter of five members of the North Side Gang and two associates by men disguised as police officers.

Gangsters diversified their business, moving into drug trafficking, prostitution, casinos and armed robbery. Often these were seamless career changes for certain mob bosses, aided by the readiness of law enforcement officers and politicians to turn a blind eye in return for regular financial inducements. The mobsters' nemesis was the evangelical J Edgar Hoover, who from 1924 onwards led the Bureau of Investigation, later to become the FBI. If crime had become organised and sophisticated, crime detection needed to follow suit.





ABOVE: A c1925 map of Chicago, showing Al Capone's control of the city's South Side and Roger Touhy's control of the Northwest Side

LEFT: Gangster Charles 'Lucky' Luciano brought Italian-American Mafia organisations together under one umbrella known as 'The Commission'

GETTY IMAGES X6, ALAMY X2

RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION

To help fill the factory jobs created by rapid industrialisation, there was a huge migration of African-Americans from the rural South to the metropolises of the North. More than a million relocated during the 1920s, eager to earn better wages and to escape the discrimination meted out by Jim Crow laws still observed in the southern states.

However, wherever they found work – perhaps in the car plants of Detroit or the steel mills of Chicago – racial division and ill treatment followed them north. By the middle of the decade, workers in certain industries were beginning to mobilise and protest against their working conditions, the first prominent African-American union being the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, established in 1925.

The living conditions of these migrant workers mirrored the discriminatory terms they faced at work. Often barred from settling in white neighbourhoods, they were forced to take sub-standard accommodation in the cheapest, least attractive parts of town, confined to the ghettos that grew in each city. But African-American voices were getting louder in their protests, steered by organisations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and Marcus Garvey's more militant Universal Negro Improvement Association. Methods differed between organisations, but there was a certain common enemy, one that conspicuously took to the streets, if cowardly hidden by hoods and capes: the Ku Klux Klan.

Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters founder A Philip Randolph (*second from right*) with fellow unionists. The organisation was the first black trade union to be affiliated with the American Federation of Labor

The Jamaican-born writer and activist Marcus Garvey sought to unite Africa and the wider African diaspora

Racial division was present in virtually every area of life; here, a barman pours soda for customers in a segregated establishment

THE KU KLUX KLAN

ABOVE: **Hordes of Klansmen march down Washington DC's Pennsylvania Avenue in 1926. By the mid-1920s, Ku Klux Klan membership is estimated to have grown to around 4 million**

RIGHT: **High support for the organisation in Texas was reflected in the name of the Dallas cigar brand 'Klansman', promoted in this 1923 poster**

The Ku Klux Klan that emerged in the early decades of the 20th century was the second iteration, the first having risen in the aftermath of the Confederate defeat in the Civil War. Founded in Georgia in 1915, the second Klan had a much more visible presence than the more secretive original group, organised as it was along similar lines to a fraternity association and willing to parade in full public view.

The most high-profile of these parades was held in Washington DC in the summer of 1925 when tens of thousands of Klansmen marched down Pennsylvania Avenue. "[The] phantom-like hosts of the Ku Klux Klan spread their white robe over the most historic thoroughfare" reported the *Washington Post* of this most brazen show of strength. As vast as it was, this was but a small sample of its membership, said to have reached as high as 4 million in the mid-1920s.

African-Americans were among the Klan's chief targets – a notable victim in 1921 was a Dallas resident, Alex Johnson, whose forehead was branded with the letters 'KKK' for daring to associate with white women – but this second Klan spread its net wider than the first. In order to appeal to potential members who didn't live in cities with burgeoning black populations, most notably the Midwest and beyond, the Klan responded to a perceived threat to the 'American' way of life from Jews and Catholics. Born from ultra-moral Protestant doctrine and reacting to apparent social ills such as adultery, the Klan – often through violent means – sought to establish their version of order on a society increasingly becoming less buttoned-down.

IMMIGRATION AND THE RED SCARE

ABOVE: **Immigration officials carry out medical inspections on new arrivals at Ellis Island, 1920**

LEFT: **Migrants were issued inspection cards; the Polish bearer of this card was deemed unfit and sent to hospital**

The Ku Klux Klan also wanted to protect US borders from those migrating there – or, at least, on closely monitoring certain emigrants. This was no minority view as the 1920s dawned. The mainstream political bodies were also fearful of the spread of communism following the Russian Revolution three years earlier. There was genuine concern that the events in Petrograd would soon be replicated in Washington DC.

Accordingly, on the back of union strikes and anarchist bombing campaigns within the US, the suppression of leftist organisations and individuals occurred in what became known as the Red Scare. This suppression was chiefly led by the US Attorney General A Mitchell Palmer, the author of the so-called Palmer Raids, a series of arrests of those believed to be left-wing activists. In the early months of 1920, the five Socialist Party members of the New York State Assembly were expelled, despite their democratic election, on the premise that their party admitted "aliens, enemy aliens and minors" into their ranks. That same month, the head of the Justice Department's General Intelligence Division, 25-year-old J Edgar Hoover, declared he had evidence of an uprising planned to occur on May Day 1920. Major cities braced themselves with a heavy police and military presence, but no revolution came.

The Red Scare fizzled out shortly after; any radicalism had consisted more of rhetoric than action. But measures were still taken out to protect the US against any Bolshevik threat, whether real or imaginary. The Immigration Act of 1924 set quotas on the number of immigrants permitted to settle on American soil, particularly targeting those from the east. Indeed, in combination with existing legislation, it effectively banned emigrants from Asian countries. Aside from keeping political 'undesirables' out, the act also sought to maintain the ideal of an American homogeneity. It wasn't revised until 1952.

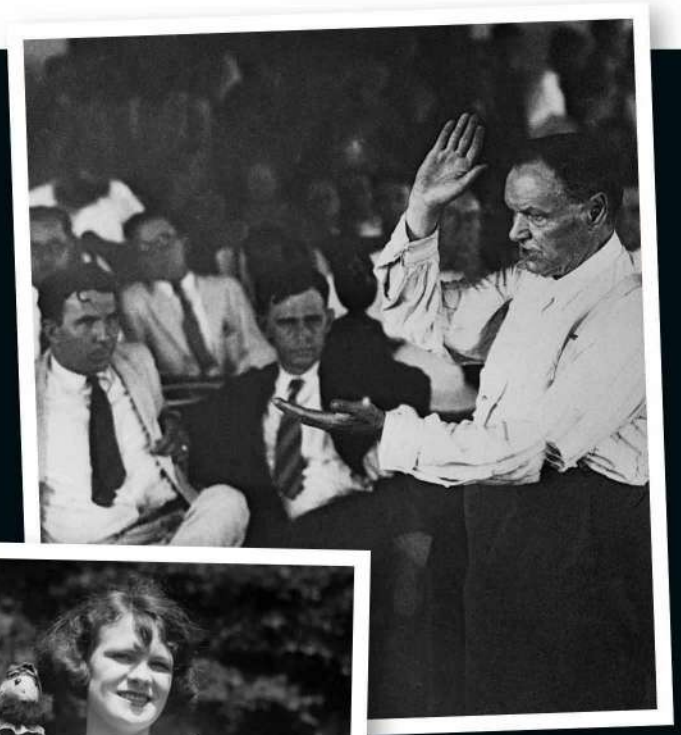
THE SCOPES TRIAL

"I'd read in the papers that boys and girls were coming home from school and telling their fathers and mothers that the Bible was all nonsense." In the early 1920s, the Tennessee state representative, John Washington Butler, campaigned hard for outlawing the teaching of human evolution in biology lessons in American public schools. He believed the practice "robs the Christian of his hope and undermines the foundation of our government".

Butler was successful, with the Butler Act passing the Tennessee state legislature in the spring of 1925. The act declared it illegal "to teach any theory that denies the story of the Divine Creation of Man as taught in the Bible, and to teach instead that man has descended from a lower order of animals". Almost immediately, the American Civil Liberties Union declared its intention to test the act's legality and sought a teacher prepared to stand trial for breaking this new law. It found him in the shape of John T Scopes, a twentysomething maths teacher who agreed, having overseen supply lessons in biology, to admit to having taught human evolution.

The trial – held in Dayton, Tennessee and engaging the services of the country's most distinguished legal minds, drew enormous national and international attention. It became a test case for academic freedom, pitching scientific evidence against fundamentalist belief. The trial lasted eight days, but the jury's verdict was reached within 10 minutes. Scopes was found guilty, with the act being upheld and remaining in place in the state for the next 42 years. The 1920s might have become known as a decade where freedom of expression was increasingly permitted and cherished, but in the classrooms of Tennessee, teachers were straitjacketed into declaring religious belief to be scientific fact. ⊙

WORDS: NIGE TASSELL



ABOVE: **Defence attorney Clarence Darrow commands the courtroom during the Scopes trial. His client was ultimately found guilty of teaching human evolution**

LEFT: **A Dayton resident poses with a monkey doll – a joking reference to John T Scopes's teachings**

GETTY IMAGES X4, ALAMY X1

THE AGE OF EMANCIPATION

Professor Sarah Churchwell talks to **Emily Briffett** about the raft of new opportunities that women enjoyed in the 1920s

MAIN: **American women could vote for the first time after the 19th Amendment was passed in 1920**

ABOVE: **Black women were often unable to exercise their right to vote, says Professor Sarah Churchwell**

GETTY IMAGES X3

With the rise of a consumer-oriented economy, mass entertainment and seismic cultural shifts, the 1920s is often hailed as a time of significant and lasting social change in the west. Did these changes permeate through the whole of society, however? Was this an era of social liberation for women as much as it was for men?

According to Professor Sarah Churchwell, the answer is a definite yes. "Women in the 1920s had a very different experience to what their mothers had," she says. "It's not an exaggeration or a myth to say that their lives changed in this decade." This can immediately be seen with some major victories for political emancipation right as the 1920s were beginning to roar: for the first time, many women were given the right to vote. A proportion of British women (those over the age of 30 who met a property qualification) became eligible in 1918, while American women won the vote soon afterwards, in 1920.

These gains were unquestionably massive steps forward, albeit they did come with certain limits. "Although all women got the vote in theory, in practice white women in the US were able to exercise this franchise more extensively than black women, especially in the South where votes were suppressed," says Churchwell. "It's important to remember that what was true for white women was not necessarily the case for black women."

World War I had been one of the catalysts for the enfranchisement of women: by bringing them into the workplace in greater numbers, it helped shift the public attitude – and inspired major economic changes in the aftermath. A generation of men had been sent off to fight, with many not ▶

returning, so women could no longer rely on husbands or fathers to support the household economically. "Women suddenly had to be wage earners," explains Churchwell. "So we see that they start to move into more professional situations and pick up new skills, such as driving and accountancy. Much of this was fuelled by necessity, but women also began to make the most of these opportunities to earn economic and professional autonomy."

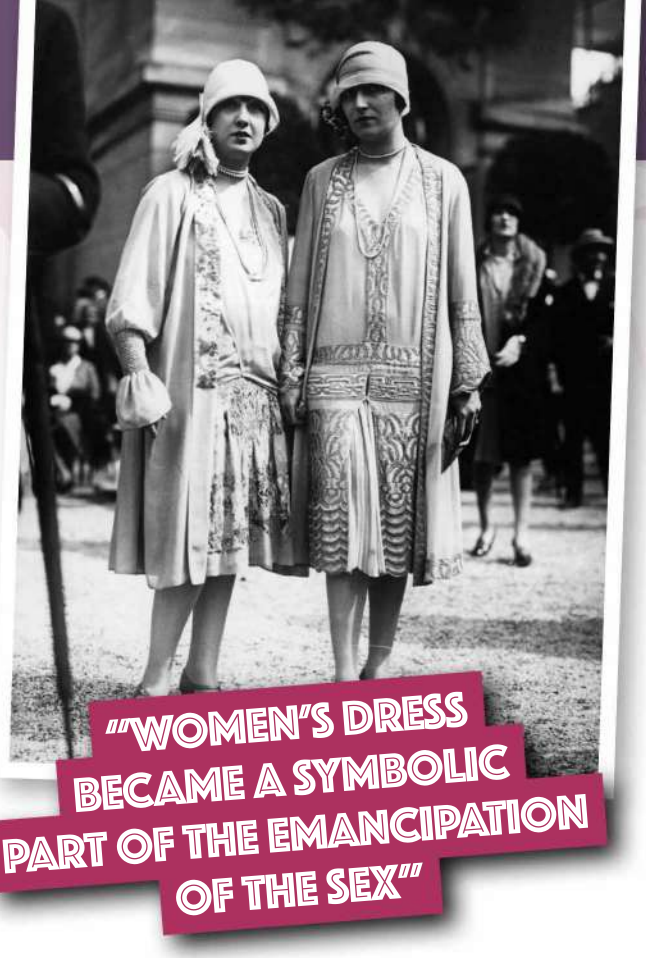
While some women returned to the domestic sphere in the years following the war, Churchwell states that "an appreciable proportion of them" refused to go back to full-time housekeeping and their traditional roles. They had taken on new responsibilities working in factories and on the home front, and were highly motivated to build upon their hard-won advances. It was, however, "a steady progress rather than a rapid acceleration of rights," argues Churchwell. "The war was just one step on that ladder of progress." And it wasn't "as much of a cultural and social rupture" in the US as it was in Europe; American culture would instead undertake its own leap forwards after World War II.

Those women who did choose to return to their traditional place within the home were not immune to societal advances, either. Household life changed with the gradual emergence and availability of labour-saving devices, among them vacuum cleaners, electric irons and kettles. "The introduction of electricity into the home really altered women's lives. The move from a reliance on gas power in the 1910s to electricity in the late 1920s was a massive difference. While it affected many facets of people's existence, its effect on domestic labour was huge," says Churchwell.

Even rudimentary refrigeration boxes meant that women could shop and prepare food ahead of time, and, importantly, spend less time in the kitchen. As such, women became less tied to the home and their household duties, and now had more free time to spend how they chose.

FOLLOWERS OF FASHION

Something that the 1920s is most well-known for is its distinctive fashion sense, especially when it came to what women were wearing. According to Churchwell, though, our expectation of everyone in flapper attire does not give an accurate picture of what the decade looked like. "I think we assume that, from 1 January 1920, women wore knee-length, fringed and sequinned skirts with feather boas: the whole nine yards. As with anything, this was a trend that evolved. That flapper image we have in our heads only really comes from the mid-to-late 1920s."



"WOMEN'S DRESS BECAME A SYMBOLIC PART OF THE EMANCIPATION OF THE SEX"

ABOVE: **Drop-waist dresses and bell-shaped cloche hats were all the rage**

BELOW: **New devices like electric irons, as seen in this colourised image, and vacuum cleaners, shown far left, changed women's lives in the home**

While women's hemlines shot up from ankle length in 1919 to knee length in 1920, this trend actually didn't last long. "It was as if the US tested the waters in 1920 and shocked itself. Think of it like a woman suddenly pulling up her skirt and then going, 'Oh no! I've gone too far!' and then dropping it again. It was a moment of culture shock; too much too soon." Instead, there was a gradual rising of women's hemlines during the first half of the decade, with each year seeing them go up a couple of inches. By 1925, skirts sat around the knee.

Then there was the drop waist (when the waistline of a dress sits lower down, around the hips), another iconic feature of Roaring Twenties female fashion. This look rose in popularity for several reasons: partly a signifier of youthful rebellion against older generations, and also as a reaction against the constrictive corsets and the silhouettes of the Victorian and Edwardian eras. "Of course, many women still wore corsets underneath these drop-waist dresses," explains Churchwell. "They were very difficult to wear well unless a woman had a certain kind of figure or had restricted herself."

GETTY IMAGES X7, ALAMY X1

Regardless, women's dress became a symbolic part of a movement of the emancipation of the sex. And with youth culture venerated more than previous generations, women hoped to celebrate their greater freedoms and free time by pulling off a more youthful look with the looser styles of dress that became popular.

Another development that changed women's lives was the increasing accessibility of the disposable sanitary pad. With Kotex's first advertisement campaign going out in January 1921, followed by the introduction of Johnson & Johnson's Modess brand in 1927, women were able to deal with menstruation more readily, while still keeping up with fashion trends.

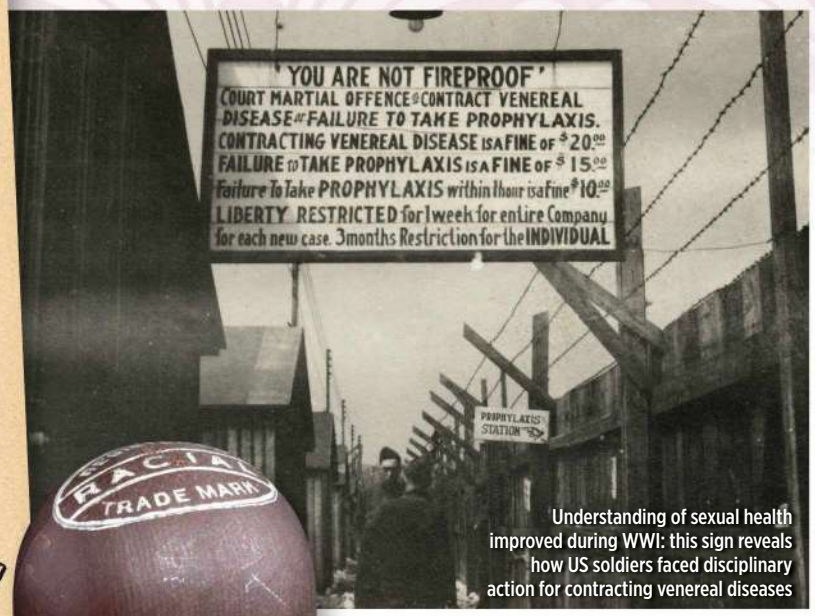
"It's important to remember that women had previously worn layers of petticoats. Not only did this keep them warm when it was cold, but the layers of fabric were a method of dealing with menstruation when women didn't have any other way of disguising it," says Churchwell. "With access to sanitary pads and tampons following soon after that, women could wear shorter dresses as they were able to keep themselves clean while menstruating."

HYGIENE AND HIGH SOCIETY

Amidst a growing public understanding of reproductive and sexual health, forms of contraception became widely available, too, including the rudimentary diaphragm. "During World War I, the US government implemented new educational programmes for what they called 'hygiene' – a euphemism for sexual health," explains Churchwell. "It was meant to stop soldiers spreading venereal diseases in training camps." Diaries, journals and letters reveal that this advice was taken on board and that contraception was increasingly used.

ABOVE LEFT: **A 1928 poster advertising sanitary products, or "protective necessities"**

ABOVE RIGHT: **Contraceptives, like this cap, were key to sexual liberation for 1920s women**


'YOU ARE NOT FIREPROOF'
COURT MARTIAL OFFENCE TO CONTRACT VENEREAL DISEASE
FAILURE TO TAKE PROPHYLAXIS.
CONTRACTING VENEREAL DISEASE IS A FINE OF $20.00
FAILURE TO TAKE PROPHYLAXIS IS A FINE OF $15.00
Failure To Take PROPHYLAXIS within 1 hour is a fine $10.00
LIBERTY RESTRICTED for 1 week for entire Company for each new case. 3 months Restriction for the INDIVIDUAL
PROPHYLAXIS STATION

Understanding of sexual health improved during WWI: this sign reveals how US soldiers faced disciplinary action for contracting venereal diseases

All the changes of the 1920s gave women more free time, and a desire to make the most of it. Social drinking became popular, for example. "Public drinking was not something that nice Edwardian women did, but certainly what cool young modern women did, from the 'Bright Young Things' (party-loving socialites in London) or the flappers in the US," says Churchwell. "This was a massive social change that signalled the autonomy of every member of society, but it was also a real chance for social independence for women."

But not everybody was happy with this level of social experimentation. "A sense of cultural decadence emerged, that included not only women's liberation but an increase in the power of black people," says Churchwell. "This is partly what groups like the Nazis and Ku Klux Klan reacted against: they weren't happy with what they saw as people getting above themselves and decided to put them back in their place with violence."

These complexities were integral to the story of the 1920s. "It's important to be sceptical and resist clichés and received wisdoms about the decade," argues Churchwell. "But in terms of whether this was a time of increased liberation for women, it's actually true. Women were definitely emancipated in the 1920s."

Social drinking became a way for women to have fun – although this photograph almost certainly shows soft drinks being consumed

SARAH CHURCHWELL is a professor of American literature and chair of public understanding of the humanities at the School of Advanced Study, University of London. This article is adapted from an interview conducted by Emily Briffett for the *HistoryExtra* podcast, available at *historyextra.com/roaring-twenties-pod*

MEET THE EXPERT

PROFESSOR SARAH CHURCHWELL ON PARALLELS BETWEEN THE 1920s AND TODAY

American culture was exported to the rest of the world, shaping the century to come

SARAH CHURCHWELL is a professor of American literature and chair of public understanding of the humanities at the School of Advanced Study, University of London. She is the author of numerous books on US history, including *Behold, America: A History of America First and the American Dream* (Bloomsbury, 2018). To hear Professor Churchwell discuss the 1920s on the *HistoryExtra* podcast, scan the QR code above or visit *historyextra.com/roaring-twenties-pod*

F Scott Fitzgerald called it an age of excess and satire, of miracles and art. It was also an age of advertising and self-advertising, of new information technology, of commodity capitalism and explosive consumerism, of status-consciousness and fads, of progressivism and reactionary conservatism. It was an age of declining empires and the sense that new empires were emerging, and an age of intense change and establishment reaction against that change.

Looking back a century later, it is increasingly clear how much the 1920s anticipated the 2020s. In many respects, the American 1920s in particular inaugurated the cultural trends of the last century, in ways that continue to impact us, and that we are now rediscovering all over again. It saw the emergence of the United States as a global superpower in the wake of World War I, which cost it far less, in human and economic terms, than Europe had to pay for its devastation.

For America it was an era of intense contradiction, of polarising debate, progressive energies and political corruption. As women got the vote in 1920, they became politically, economically and sexually emancipated. Skirts were rising, and they were smoking and drinking in public. But they shouldn't have been drinking, because prohibition had come into effect a few months earlier – one regressive amendment, and one progressive amendment, passed in relatively quick succession. The 1920s began as it would go on, with conflicting, divisive pulls in opposite political directions.

On the whole, authoritarianism was met by an outlaw spirit. Fights over reproductive rights increased along with divorce rates, while the word 'scofflaw' was coined in the 1920s to describe the drinkers who openly flouted prohibition. Organised crime exploded in defiance of establishment rules and calls for 'law and order'. Prosperity boomed – for criminals, and for the middle classes. But at the same time, inequality widened; as the popular song 'Ain't We Got Fun' noted, "The rich get richer and the poor get... children." Meanwhile, the Harlem Renaissance was born, as black Americans asserted the value of their own racial and cultural heritage in a concerted way for the first time. And by no coincidence the Ku Klux Klan was also on the rise, beginning to sweep across the country in reaction against African-American assertions of civil rights and cultural identity.

Importantly, it was an age transformed, like ours, by new forms of media: in the 1920s mass media changed everything, just as the digital revolution has transformed our world in a few decades. Like social media, broadcast and print media were hugely democratising. They were easier to access than ever before, demanding less formal education. As mass immigration peaked, these channels made it easier for immigrants learning English to become culturally literate and to assimilate. But they were also, by definition, destabilising old structures. And, along the way, American culture was exported back out to the rest of the world, hugely shaping the century to come and beyond – including our own uncertain, chaotic and polarised age of excess in the 2020s.

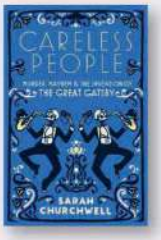
Some Americans resorted to creative measures to get around prohibition, which came into effect in 1920

GETTY IMAGES X1, ALAMY X1

GET HOOKED

Explore the Roaring Twenties further with our pick of key resources

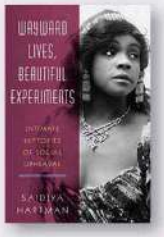
BOOKS



Careless People: Murder, Mayhem and the Invention of The Great Gatsby

By Prof Sarah Churchwell (Virago, 2013)

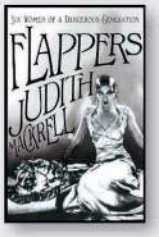
Professor Sarah Churchwell tells the true story behind F Scott Fitzgerald's masterpiece, exploring in newly rich detail its relation to the extravagant and chaotic world in which the author lived.



Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval

By Prof Saidiya Hartman (WW Norton & Company, 2019)

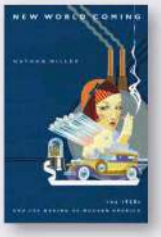
Professor Saidiya Hartman examines the revolution of black intimate life that unfolded in Philadelphia and New York at the beginning of the 20th century – from queer relations to single motherhood.



Flappers: Six Women of a Dangerous Generation

By Judith Mackrell (Macmillan, 2013)

Judith Mackrell explores the lives of six women who defined the jazz age: Josephine Baker, Tallulah Bankhead, Diana Cooper, Nancy Cunard, Zelda Fitzgerald and Tamara de Lempicka.



New World Coming: The 1920s and the Making of Modern America

By Nathan Miller (Scribner, 2003)

Nathan Miller's history of the 1920s documents such events as voting rights for women, the jazz age, the release of the Model T Ford and Lindbergh's flight over the Atlantic.

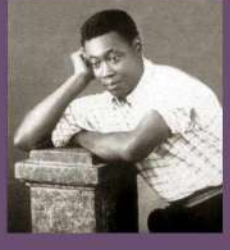
ON THE BBC

BBC RADIO 4

◀ You're Dead to Me: Prohibition
bbc.co.uk/programmes/p09drjv7
Greg Jenner, Professor Sarah Churchwell and comedian Kemah Bob explore the implementation and after-effects of prohibition in the US.

BBC RADIO 4

◀ The Long View: The Roaring Twenties
bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000wrjs
Jonathan Freedland and his guests separate myth and reality as they look back at the post-pandemic 1920s.



BBC RADIO 3

◀ Arts and Ideas: Claude McKay and the Harlem Renaissance
bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0d33vbd
Johny Pitts, Pearl Cleage and Nadifa Mohamed talk to Professor Shahidha Bari about poet Claude McKay and the ideas that led to the Harlem Renaissance.

ONLINE AND AUDIO

▶ For podcasts, features, quizzes, interviews and more on the Roaring Twenties, scan the QR code on the right, or visit *historyextra.com/roaring-twenties*

▶ Prohibition: busting myths about the ban on booze
Professor Mark Lawrence Schrad reveals how campaigns to ban alcohol weren't just led by puritanical evangelicals. Listen at *bit.ly/3Y6SR2d*

▶ America's Roaring Twenties: everything you wanted to know
Professor Sarah Churchwell answers listener questions about the Roaring Twenties in the US. Listen at *bit.ly/3kW43Re*

▶ Hollywood in the 1920s: scandals and the end of silent films
Lauren Good takes us from the scandals that rocked the movie world to the 'talkies' that changed showbusiness forever. Read at *bit.ly/3jhpjAk*

WATCH

The Great Gatsby (2013)

(available to stream on multiple platforms)

Director Baz Luhrmann reimagines F Scott Fitzgerald's 1925 novel, which centres on the past and lifestyle of enigmatic millionaire Jay Gatsby.

The Kid (1921)

(available to rent or buy on Amazon Prime Video)

Charlie Chaplin – who also produced and directed the film – stars as a tramp who cares for a boy after he's abandoned as a newborn.

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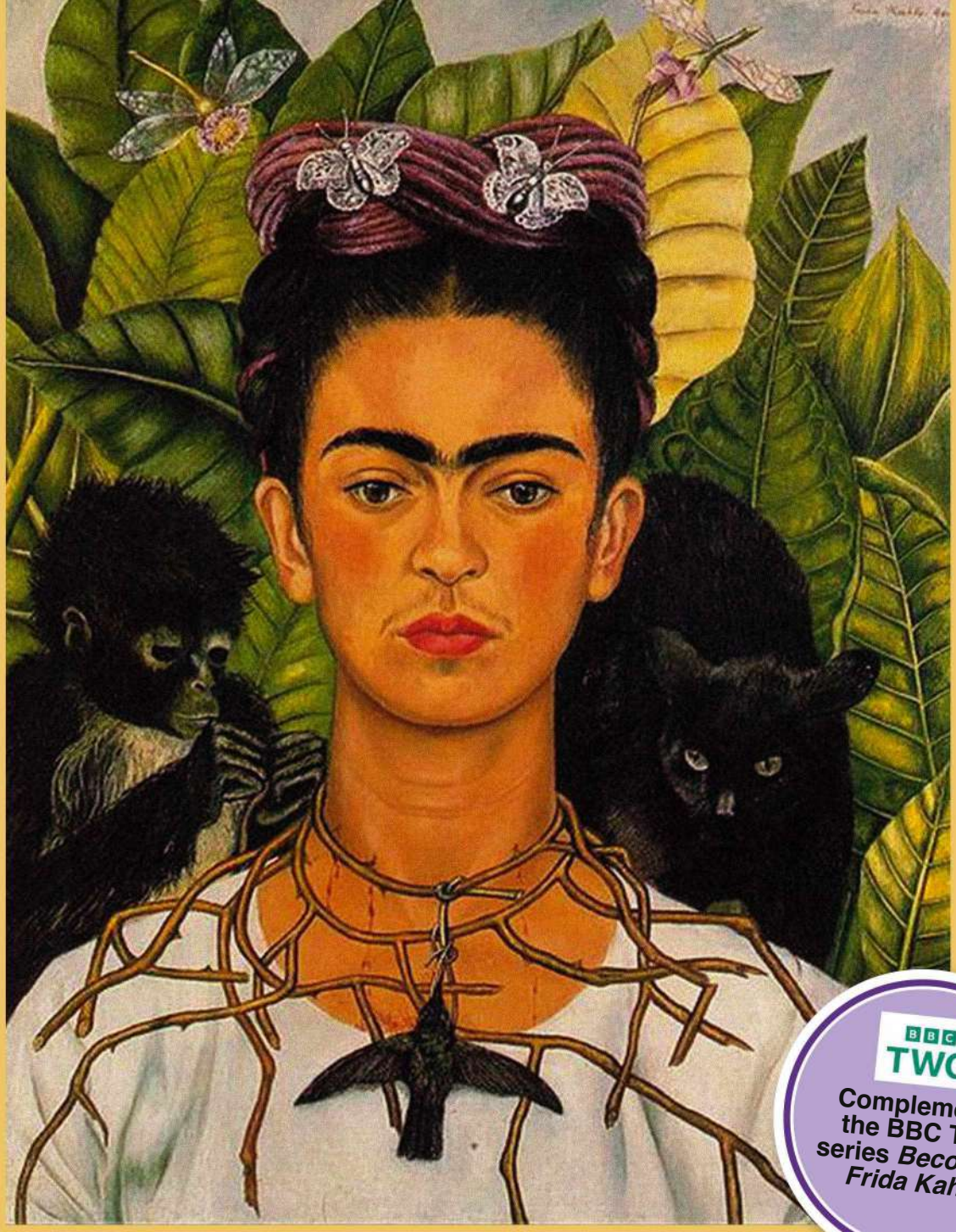


Frida Kahlo's *Self-Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird* (1940). The artist's work was often autobiographical; here, the thorns likely represent the pain she felt due to the breakup of her marriage

BBC TWO Complements the BBC Two series *Becoming Frida Kahlo*

FRIDA KAHLO
Life after life

Nearly 70 years after her death, the work of Frida Kahlo continues to move, excite and inspire. **Jonathan Wright** looks at the career of the Mexican artist and her legacy today

Today, we all fall under the gaze of Frida Kahlo. Looking out from posters, prints, book covers, mugs, tea towels and T-shirts, her image is more familiar than it was during her short life. Sometimes she appears androgynous, sometimes feminine and delicate, but there's always an underlying sense of someone who carefully curated her own public image. No wonder Kahlo fits so easily into the iconography of a 21st-century world that's invented the idea of the influencer, personifying as this version of Kahlo does a giddy and contradictory mix of bohemianism, tragic heroine and living your own best life.

But how much does this tell us about the historical Frida Kahlo, an artist of rare talent who grew up amidst the turmoil of the Mexican Revolution, endured chronic pain and fragile health throughout her life and who, in the wake of her marriage to Mexican muralist Diego Rivera, mixed with some of the 20th century's most important figures?

A great deal in that she understood the power of her own image, but also not much at all when you compare the kinds of images typically chosen for Kahlo merchandise to paintings that are rarely, if ever, shown on book covers. To take just one of the many self-portraits that were so integral to her work, *Henry Ford Hospital* (1932) shows Kahlo lying in a pool of her own blood on a hospital bed (*pictured below right*). A single tear falls across one cheek. Six red umbilical cords emanate from her stomach, one of which is attached to a male foetus. The painting was created in the wake of a miscarriage.

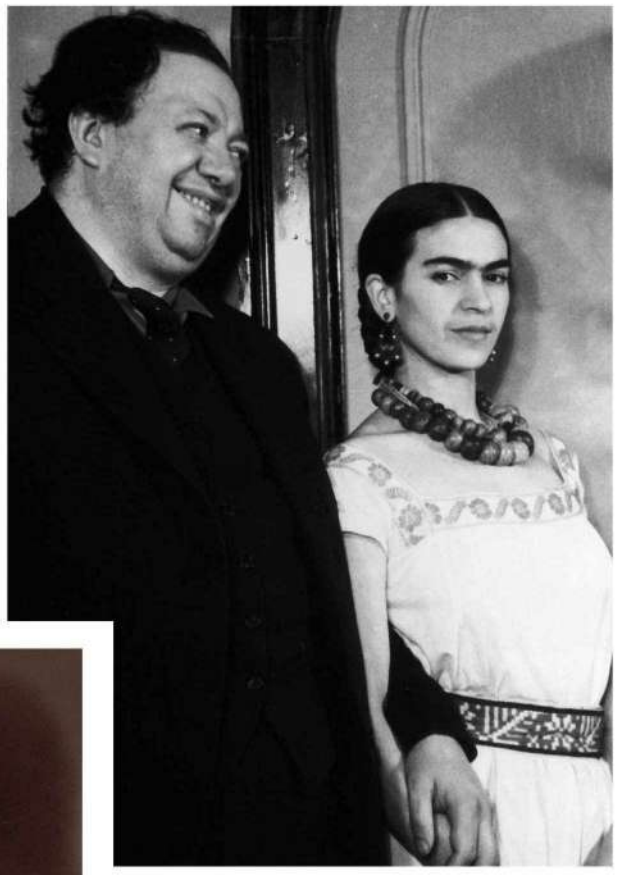
It's a bleak and unflinchingly honest portrayal of trauma. Without this kind of extraordinary painting to give substance to her public persona, 'Fridamania' – a term that encompasses not just Kahlo's posthumous fame but her adoption as a figurehead by Mexican-Americans, feminist movements and members of the LGBTQ+ community – simply wouldn't exist. Forget for a moment Kahlo's 21st-century image and focus on how she became a painter capable of such work.

TIMES OF TURMOIL

It's a story that begins in 1907 in Coyoacán, then a small village on the outskirts of Mexico City, when Kahlo became the third of four daughters born to German émigré Guillermo Kahlo (1871–1941) and Matilde Calderón y González (1874–1932), herself the daughter of an indigenous father and a Spanish-descended mother. Guillermo was a talented and successful photographer, although the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution in 1910 badly impacted on his work because he relied on commissions from the recently overthrown government.

While Kahlo's relationship with her conservative mother was often tense, she was close to her father, especially after Kahlo contracted polio when she was six years old. This left her with a withered and shortened right leg – and may partly explain her love of long traditional dresses because they covered her disability. According to art historian Hayden Herrera's biography *Frida*, Guillermo's own experience of epileptic fits helped the pair forge a close bond based on a shared experience of ill-health. Guillermo taught his daughter about photography and painting. Later she would write in her diary of his "tenderness " and "understanding for all my problems".

In 1922, Kahlo entered the prestigious Escuela Nacional Preparatoria (National Preparatory School), one of only 35 girls among 2,000 students. The school ▶



ABOVE: **Kahlo with her husband, Diego Rivera, in 1932. The couple divorced in 1939, before remarrying a year later**

LEFT: **A studio portrait of Kahlo's parents, Guillermo and Matilde. The artist enjoyed a close bond with her father, but her relationship with her mother was often strained**

Kahlo's *Henry Ford Hospital* (1932). The deeply personal work was painted in the wake of a miscarriage the artist suffered in Detroit

GETTY IMAGES X2, ALAMY X2

authorities embraced *indigenismo*, an anti-colonial approach to Mexican identity that played into Kahlo's creation of a distinctive public image. She began claiming she had been born in 1910, "a daughter of the revolution".

She and her friends, a small and informal group called Los Cachuchas after the peaked caps they wore, were rebellious and irreverent, but also politically engaged and fiercely intellectual. "We Cachuchas were anarchically happy," wrote one of their number, Manuel González Ramírez, adding, "It would be a bit pious to say that we were studying in those days. We actually devoured books on a variety of subjects, but especially literature."

Kahlo planned to become a doctor until a horrific accident changed the trajectory of her life. On 17 September 1925, Kahlo and her first love, Alejandro Gómez Arias, the unofficial leader of Los Cachuchas, were aboard a bus when it was hit by a streetcar. Several passengers died. Kahlo was impaled on an iron handrail that pierced her pelvis.

Her abdomen and uterus were punctured, she suffered multiple broken bones and her right foot was crushed. Doctors doubted she would survive. After her initial convalescence, she was diagnosed as having three displaced vertebrae, and had to wear a plaster corset and spend a further three months in bed. Her relationship with Arias, of which his parents disapproved, would finally end after he was sent on a tour of Europe.

LOVE AND MARRIAGE

Enduring a second long convalescence – her battle with polio had isolated her for nine months – Kahlo began to take art seriously. Her mother gave her a specially designed easel so Kahlo could paint in bed. She later wrote, "I paint myself because I am often alone and I am the subject I know best."

In late 1927, although she would live in chronic pain for the rest of her life and undergo multiple operations, Kahlo was well enough to enter the world again. Her friends, now at university, were involved in student politics. Kahlo joined the Mexican Communist Party (PCM), whose members included such radical figures as the Italian-American photographer Tina Modotti (1896–1942). At one of Modotti's social gatherings – although accounts differ, and both parties had a habit of embellishing stories – Kahlo was introduced to Diego Rivera (1886–1957).

Akin in his own lifetime to Pablo Picasso in terms of recognition factor, Rivera was an art superstar. In 2018, his 1931 painting *The Rivals* fetched $9.76m (£7.17m) at a US auction – a record for a Latin American artist that would only be broken by the $34.9m (£25m) sale of Kahlo's 1949 work *Diego and I* three years later. Typically forthright, Kahlo asked Rivera to look at her artworks and to judge whether she had any talent. Her work, he later wrote, "revealed an unusual energy of expression, precise delineation of character, and true severity". Soon, she became "the most important fact in my life".

The two married in August 1929. Matilde disapproved of Kahlo marrying a radical bohemian 20 years her daughter's senior, a man whose love life was infamously convoluted. Guillermo, mindful of Rivera's wealth and his daughter's likely need for expensive medical treatment in the years ahead, took the opposite view. Their parents dubbed the couple "the elephant" and "the dove", such was the difference in their physical stature.

GLOBAL ATTENTION

The couple's marriage was reported internationally, and in the 1930s, the couple took on a kind of joint identity as 'Diego and Frida', art-radical precursors to Posh'n'Becks or Brangelina. Mexican fascination with the couple went global when they travelled to San Francisco in 1930. In the years immediately following, Rivera received lucrative commissions for huge murals, ironically enough considering his political sympathies, paid for by industrialists and financiers such as the Fords and Rockefellers – although this American work rather dried up after Rivera painted Lenin in a mural at the Rockefeller Center, an artwork later chiselled off the wall.

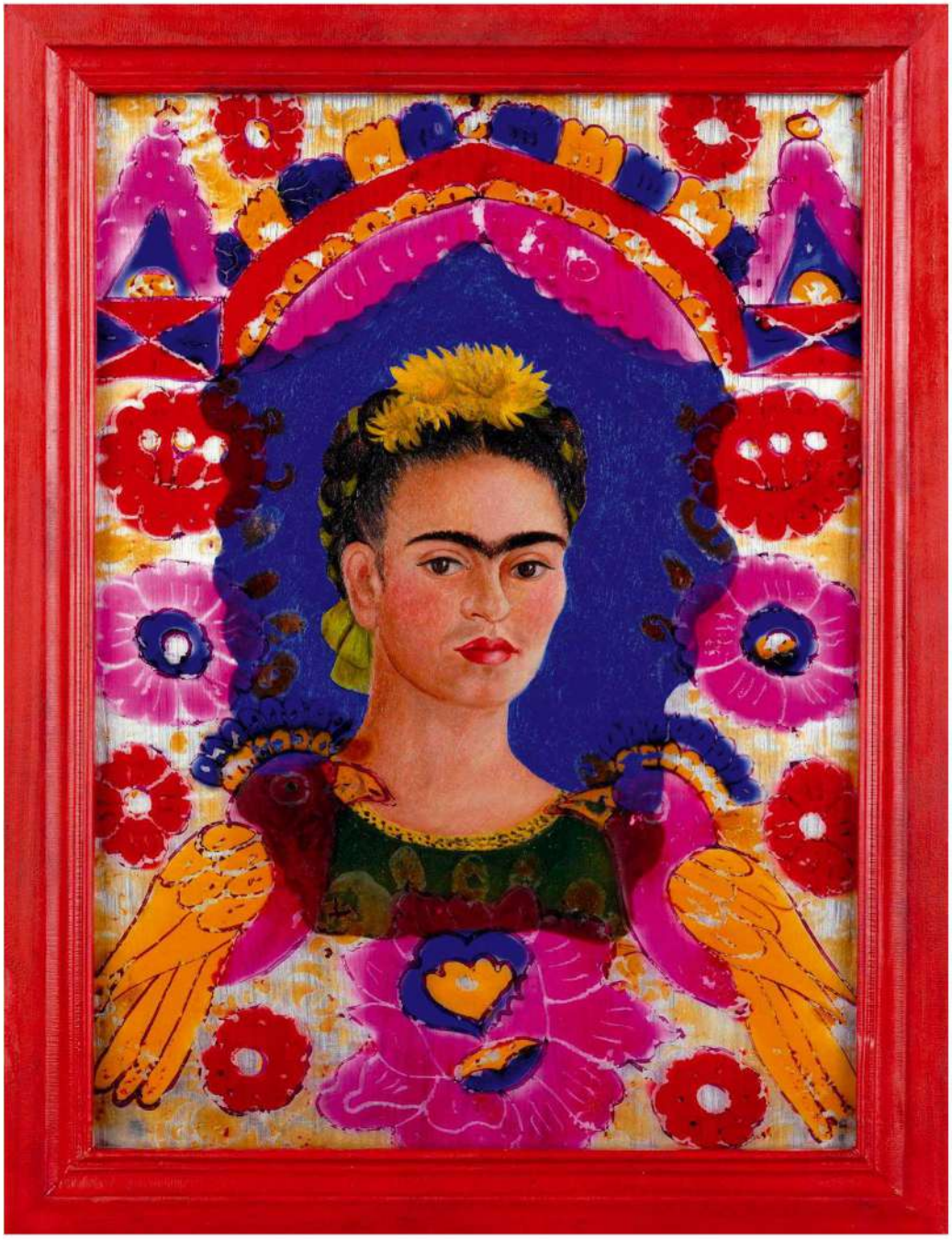
This need to travel for Rivera's work explains why Kahlo's *Henry Ford Hospital* also shows Detroit, the city where Kahlo lost her child, on the horizon, a placement that only adds to the desolation of the scene. Yet there's a risk here of seeing Kahlo as someone to whom things were happening, as opposed to her husband who was out in the world making his way.

A 1931 work depicting Kahlo with her husband. By this time, Diego Rivera was one of the world's most famous living artists, sought after for his murals

Kahlo pictured with Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky (*second from right*), along with Trotsky's wife Natalia and American Marxist theorist Max Shachtman

Kahlo painting in bed, 1952. Injuries she sustained in a bus accident, and the surgeries that they entailed, greatly affected her mobility

GETTY IMAGES X2, ALAMY X3



It's an inherently sexist perception that all too often attaches itself to female artists, musicians and writers. It also ignores how Kahlo's own art was developing over this time. Yes, she often dealt with her own pain, over which she had little control, but Kahlo was transmuting these experiences into something mysterious yet universal – and she knew this. "Of course he [Rivera] does well for a little boy, but it is I who am the big artist," she mischievously told the *Detroit News* as early as 1933.

Over the course of the 1930s and through to her death in 1954, she backed up this idea with a series of canvases, often surprisingly small when you see them in galleries, that have become internationally famous.

Along the way, she enjoyed notable successes, such as a 1938 New York City exhibition and the sale of *The Frame* to The Louvre in 1939, but struggled to make a living from her painting until the 1940s. Her work was heavily influenced by Mexican folk art and rich in symbolism, both pre-Colombian and Christian. It was often deeply political, and confronted questions around gender, class and race.

She knew the great, the good and the notorious, sometimes intimately, as when she had an affair with the exiled Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky. Her stormy relationship with Rivera, interrupted by divorce in 1939, endured and the couple reconciled and remarried – although neither ever learnt the knack of fidelity. During the course of their relationship, Kahlo had affairs with both men and women, including Costa Rican-born singer Chavela Vargas.

"Ignoring medical advice, Kahlo arrived at the opening party by ambulance"

ABOVE: **Kahlo's 1938 self-portrait *The Frame* was sold to The Louvre the following year**

RIGHT: **Mourners stand alongside Kahlo's hammer and sickle-decorated casket in July 1954**

DEATH AND REBIRTH

In April 1953, Kahlo staged her first solo exhibition in Mexico, at the Galería Arte Contemporaneo. Few expected her to attend. But ignoring medical advice, she arrived at the exhibition's opening party by ambulance before being carried on a stretcher to her own four-poster bed, which she had arranged to have moved from her home to the gallery. Predictably, this caused a sensation.

It was an evening that says much about how Fridamania subsequently attached itself to her. To reiterate, for all she was a deeply serious artist whose life was bound up with her work, she understood the power of her own public image as keenly as a Kardashian. For further evidence, look at a photograph of Kahlo and Rivera from 1932 (*pictured on page 53*), the same year that she painted *Henry Ford Hospital*. While Rivera smiles and his attention seems elsewhere, Kahlo looks directly at the camera. It's Kahlo who commands your attention. She looks magnificent.

On 13 July 1954, Kahlo died, aged just 47. The official cause of death was pulmonary embolism, although some believe she may have taken her own life. Following her death, her body lay in state for a night at the Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico's most important cultural centre, under a Communist flag. The next day, she was cremated and her ashes reside in a pre-Colombian urn at her family home, La Casa Azul, now a museum. The day of her passing, the same day Frida Kahlo's rich and strange afterlife began, was, said Diego Rivera, "the most tragic day of my life".

GET HOOKED

WATCH

BBC TWO Learn more about the artist's life in the forthcoming BBC Two series *Becoming Frida Kahlo*. Turn to page 75 for further details and scheduling information.

WHAT GREAT PAINTINGS SAY

Quinten Massys's unconventional, 'warts and all' work contains hidden messages designed to shock and amuse

An Old Woman ('The Ugly Duchess')

by Quinten Massys, c1513

Hanging alongside traditional Renaissance works by artists such as Sandro Botticelli and Jan Gossaert is a portrait that will almost certainly make you stop in your tracks. Far from the type of flattering likeness one might expect from a 16th-century portrait, *The Ugly Duchess*, as she is affectionately known, can only be labelled as grotesque. Her eyes could be described as lively, but her bulging forehead, wide snub nose, pimpled, wrinkly skin, protruding ears and toothless mouth render her as far from a typical Renaissance beauty as might be imagined. Harsh words, perhaps, but this is, in fact, the reaction that the painting's creator, Flemish artist Quinten Massys, wished to inspire in viewers, says Emma Capron, associate curator of Renaissance painting at the National Gallery, London.

"The Duchess forms one half of a pair of paintings that were created as works of satire, a parody of the traditional marriage portrait," explains Capron. "Here we see an older woman presenting herself as a young maiden, offering a rosebud – a flower with sexual connotations – to her partner, who is depicted in the accompanying panel holding up his hand as if to reject her offer or salute her."

DEFYING CONVENTION

The Duchess's clothes are also designed to provoke mirth. She is certainly not a commoner; her clothes are rich and costly, but she displays none of the modesty expected of an older woman in the 16th century.

"The elaborate horned headdress was a typical feature of early 15th-century headgear for women, so she is many decades out of fashion," says Capron. "By the early 16th century, such garments were equated with excessive female vanity, and their horn shape was actually likened to the Devil. Her tightly laced, low-cut bodice reveals her wrinkly cleavage, and she has dispensed with the translucent fabric that women would have worn beneath such outfits for modesty."

"In another defiance of convention," continues Capron, "when placed alongside her partner image – as she will be in the National Gallery's forthcoming exhibition – the Duchess appears on the 'proper right' [on the old man's right side as he looks out from the frame], a space occupied for men in double portraits to convey their dominant status."

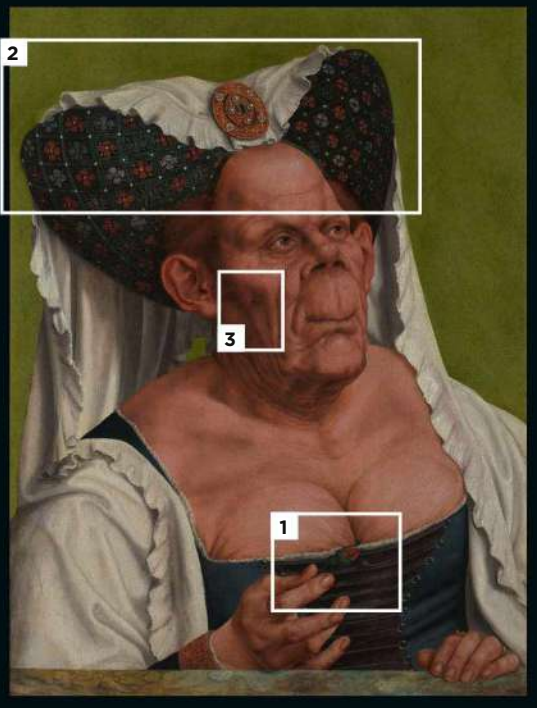
Seemingly rejected by her partner, inappropriately attired and a figure of fun and derision to those who gaze upon her, there seems little to redeem the Duchess. Why, then, would such a painting have been created, and is there a real woman behind the portrait? No, says Capron, who believes that the painting may well have been born out of a shared interest in imagined grotesque heads by Massys and his contemporary Leonardo da Vinci – a fascination that might have inspired both artists.

There is also a case to be made that Massys was influenced by Erasmus, the Dutch humanist and scholar whom Massys painted in 1517. His 1511 work *In Praise of Folly* satirises women who "still play the coquette", who "cannot tear themselves away from their mirrors" and "do not hesitate to exhibit their repulsive withered breasts".

"There has been speculation in the past that the woman depicted may have suffered from a form of Paget's Disease [a metabolic abnormality that enlarges and deforms the bones]," says Capron. "I believe, though, that we need to look at this portrait within a broader genre that explored, imaginatively, the comic and expressive potential of distorting the human face, rather than try to identify her as a real person.

"Old women in headdresses with grotesque features appear in other manuscripts and prints of the day. Massys has cleverly taken this popular folkloric type and given it the grand portrait treatment to add to its humour."

WORDS: CHARLOTTE HODGMAN



1. ROSEBUD

The woman is depicted offering a limp, drooping rosebud – flowers in portraits are usually a symbol of love and engagement, but roses had sexual connotations. Will the flower ever bloom for her?

2. HEADDRESS

The Duchess wears a heart-shaped bonnet, a type of headwear popular in the late medieval period and usually worn by women of high status. On it, she has fixed a gold and pearl brooch.

3. FACIAL FEATURES

Massys has painted, in great detail, every blemish and wrinkle on the woman's face, including a large wart with sprouting hair.

GET HOOKED

The Ugly Duchess will be reunited with her companion piece, *An Old Man*, in a new exhibition – The Ugly Duchess: Beauty and Satire in the Renaissance – at the National Gallery from 16 March to 11 June 2023. Admission is free. Visit *nationalgallery.org.uk/exhibitions* for more information.

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ANIMAL ATTRACTIONS

We showcase some of the most fascinating – and downright bizarre – zoo photographs of the 19th and early 20th centuries, when audience entertainment was placed above animal welfare concerns in ways that have thankfully since been outlawed

ELEPHANT RIDES, 19th century

▼ With seemingly little concern for their own safety – or the welfare of the animals transporting them – groups of children and adults take a ride on a pair of elephants at London Zoo. Opened in 1828 as a site for scientific study, the zoo welcomed its first elephant in 1831 but wouldn't open to the public until 1847. Elephant rides were a firm favourite with visitors and continued well into the 20th century – the future Queen Elizabeth II and her sister Princess Margaret both jumped on the 'elephant-wagon', enjoying a ride in May 1939.

CONEY ISLAND AMUSEMENTS, c1904

◀ Although perhaps not the most obvious form of transport, these visitors to Luna Park – one of three large amusement parks built at Coney Island, New York, between 1897 and 1904 – are preparing to be whisked away in goat-drawn carriages. By the early 1900s, Coney Island became something of a mecca for working-class New Yorkers seeking cheap food and entertainment, and an escape from the drudgery and hardship of their daily lives.

GETTY IMAGES X1, ALAMY X1 ▶

POLAR BEAR PEN, c1898

◀ Confined to a foreboding cage within Korkeasaari Zoo, a lone polar bear is inspected at arm's length by its keeper. Located in the Gulf of Finland on an island of the same name, the zoo first opened to the public in 1889.

FEEDING TIME, c1900

▶ An impeccably dressed tamer serves up a feast for a party of ravenous big cats at Hagenbeck Zoo, Hamburg. Fishmonger-turned-animal dealer Carl Hagenbeck began amassing exotic animals in 1863, travelling the world in search of new species to trade and exhibit. He is widely credited with creating the modern zoo, with bar-less enclosures more akin to the animals' natural habitats.

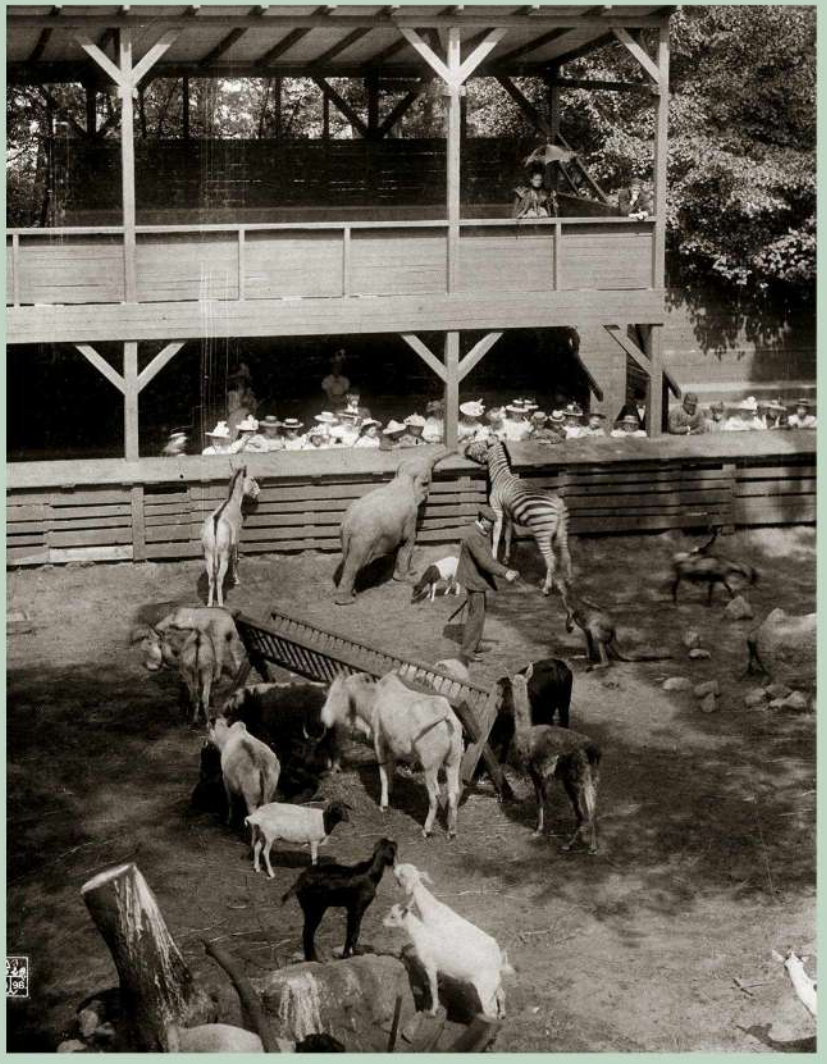
NEW YORK NEWBORN, 1919

◀ The mother of the first pygmy hippopotamus born in captivity at New York Zoological Park (now widely known as the Bronx Zoo) presents her calf to photographers.

ALAMY X4, GETTY IMAGES X3

HUNGRY HIPPO, c19th century

▲ A keeper prepares to toss food into the gaping mouth of one of London Zoo's hippopotamuses. During the Victorian era, the zoo became home to the first common hippopotamus seen in Europe since Roman times. Named after the island in the Nile near to where he was captured, Obaysch became a major tourist attraction. In 1854, the zoo acquired a female, Adhela, and the two successfully mated.

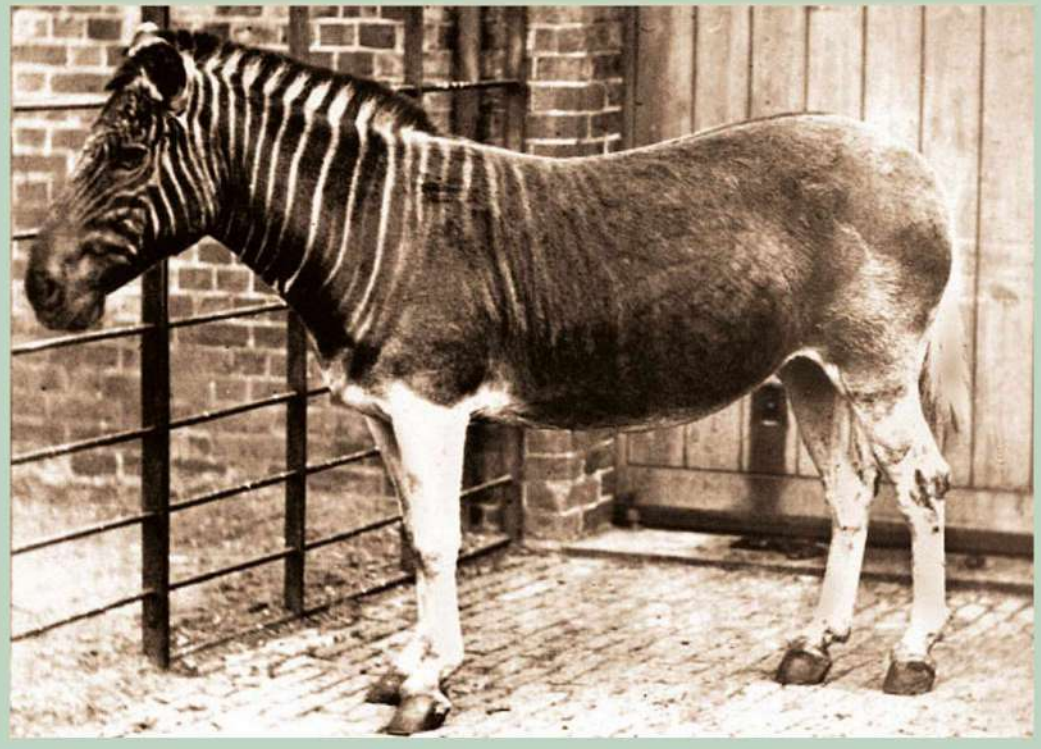


ALL CREATURES, c1898

▲ A crowd of eager spectators gather outside an enclosure housing a bewildering array of animals at Hagenbeck Zoo – from an elephant and a zebra, to goats and even a kangaroo.

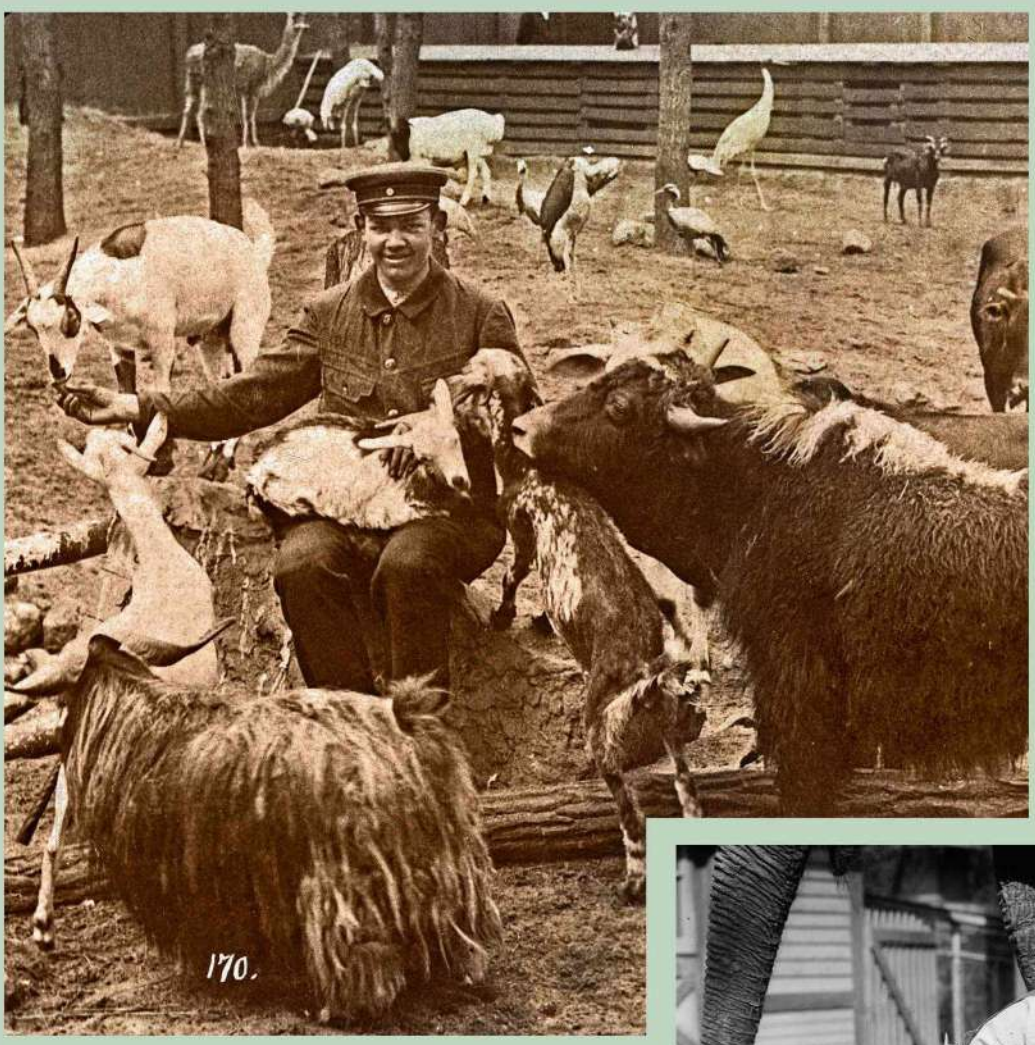
LAST OF THE QUAGGAS, c1870

▼ This image shows the only quagga – a subspecies of the plains zebra, which boasted a limited pattern of primarily brown and white stripes – to have been photographed alive. The last wild quagga population lived in the Orange Free State but had been hunted to extinction by 1878; the last captive specimen died in Amsterdam in August 1883. Long thought to be a distinct species, it was the first extinct animal to have its DNA sequenced, in 1984.



MONKEY HOUSE, c1900

▲ The vast monkey house at Schönbrunn Zoo in Vienna – the world's oldest zoo – draws a throng of onlookers.



BEHIND THE SCENES, c1907

◀ A zookeeper tends to cattle, goats and other animals at Hamburg's Hagenbeck Zoo. Disturbingly, Hagenbeck was not only used for exhibiting animals. The zoo's founder, Carl Hagenbeck, also staged – and helped popularise – "ethnological expositions", or human zoos, where indigenous peoples, brought to Germany from all over the world, lived and 'performed' in enclosures to entertain a paying public.

NAIL FILING, c1900

▼ An elephant enjoys a pedicure at Central Park Zoo, New York City – one of the oldest municipal zoos in the United States.

MAKING A SPLASH, c1901

▲ Crowds of people watch a group of sea lions at play in Central Park Zoo, New York City. Sea lions were among the first animals to be exhibited at the zoo, and they have long been popular with visitors – with one notable exception. In 1935, a male sea lion named Joe was moved some 10 miles across the city to Prospect Park Zoo because his loud barking was upsetting residents on nearby Fifth Avenue.

CAMEL RIDES, c1890

◀ Three young girls take a ride on a camel at London Zoo, one perched precariously on the animal's neck.

GETTY IMAGES X7, ALAMY X1

BEAR ENCLOSURE, c1906

▶ New York Zoological Park opened in 1899 with just under 850 animals across 22 separate exhibits. In 1906, the year this picture was taken, two bear cubs – Teddy B and Teddy G (collectively known as the Roosevelt bears, after 26th US president Theodore Roosevelt) – were caught in Colorado and presented to the park.

IN THE KITCHEN, c1922

▼ Unlike their fictional counterparts, the bears at the National Zoo in Washington DC ate neither honey or porridge. Instead, baker Charles C Trevey was tasked with making huge loaves of bread for the bears to devour.

A PHEASANT DAY OUT, c1900

▲ A group of visitors take a pit stop on a bench in front of the pheasant run at Berlin Zoo. The zoo grew from the menagerie of Frederick William III of Prussia, who had a passion for exotic animals. His son, Frederick William IV, did not share this love and, on his accession in 1840, gifted his pheasant house and animals to the people of Berlin; the Berlin Zoological Garden opened on 1 August 1844.

BIG CAT TRAINING, c1898

◀ Not your average house pets, these big cats at Paris Zoological Gardens are being put through their paces by their trainer, watched – from behind the safety of the cage bars – by two awestruck onlookers. ⊙

WORDS: CHARLOTTE HODGMAN AND DANNY BIRD

GET HOOKED

LISTEN
Historian Dr Joanne Cormac discusses Victorian zoos on an episode of the *HistoryExtra* podcast. Listen now at *historyextra.com/victorian-zoos-pod*

WHAT IF... THE SCHLIEFFEN PLAN HAD BEEN SUCCESSFUL?

Nige Tassell and **Professor Nick Lloyd** consider the alternative shape of the 20th century had Germany's bold military strategy not failed

Devised back in 1905 by Field Marshal Alfred von Schlieffen, the Schlieffen Plan was a military strategy deployed by Germany in 1914 with the aim of winning the war in Europe in swift fashion. Rather than engage with France on its border, German troops would take a circuitous route through Belgium and the Low Countries in order to outflank and envelop the French army, forcing a quick surrender. With the French threat removed, Germany would then relocate its forces to nullify Russia in the east.

Based on a misguided prediction that Britain wouldn't step in to defend Belgium, the plan failed, leading to a protracted stalemate on the battlefields of western Europe and a four-year world war that is estimated to have claimed up to 15 million lives.

Nick Lloyd, professor of modern warfare at King's College London and author of *The Western Front: A History of the First World War* (Viking, 2021), is in no doubt that the successful execution of the Schlieffen Plan would have avoided such a catastrophic amount of casualties. "Had it achieved its aims and knocked France out of the war, then the Western Front as it became known would not have existed. The British Expeditionary Force could not have continued without French support and would have been forced to leave the continent very quickly, akin to the scenes witnessed in the summer of 1940."

As well as the heavy death toll having been avoided, Europe would not have suffered from the crippling economic damage caused by World War I. "If the war had come to a conclusion in 1914 or 1915, Europe would have remained the most powerful continent in the world. It's likely that some form of economic recovery would have taken off in 1917–18 and brought greater prosperity all round, thus avoiding the kind of economic crash we would see in 1929."

Had the Schlieffen Plan achieved its goals both in the west and the east, Professor Lloyd sees the map of Europe being redrawn, with Germany possibly annexing coveted territory such as Poland and the Baltic states. In the west, Belgium "would also certainly have been annexed and put into a close economic and political relationship with Germany, with garrison troops being stationed in the country to guarantee Germany supremacy." And what of France? "Berlin would have likely demanded a more punitive peace treaty to that of 1871, with significant reparations, the demobilisation of the French army, and adjustments on the border to suit German interests."

DID YOU KNOW?

LATE ADVICE

Alfred von Schlieffen died in January 1913, more than a year before his plan was deployed. It is claimed that his final words were "Remember – keep the right wing very strong" in reference to a key part of the strategy, but this is likely apocryphal.

IN CONTEXT

When war broke out in August 1914, Germany faced enemies to both the west (France) and the east (Russia). Without the military capability of engaging two significant adversaries simultaneously, a plan drawn up nearly 10 years earlier was put into practice, whereby Germany would set a trap for France by engaging them not on the countries' shared border but via Belgium. A swift victory would supposedly ensue, with the German troops then redeployed to take on the Imperial Russian Army. But the strategy – the Schlieffen Plan – was overly optimistic, failing to take into consideration both logistical issues and the intervention of the British Expeditionary Force. The swift victory was instead replaced by a lengthy campaign on what became known as the Western Front.

ABOVE: **British soldiers pictured using a signalling lamp on the Western Front**

RIGHT: **Schlieffen believed that attacking France via Belgium would earn Germany a speedy victory**

PRESTIGE AND POWER

The political and military make-up of the following decades would have looked very different had German domination prevailed. "It is certainly likely that a victorious war in 1914 would have added greatly to the prestige and power of Imperial Germany," explains Professor Lloyd. "Kaiser Wilhelm II would have taken his place among the great leaders of history as his empire expanded in both the east and west, and looked to dominate Europe in peacetime with its chief rivals unable to stop it."

Victory, of course, wouldn't have precipitated the depth of domestic

GETTY IMAGES X4

dissent that Germany suffered from after the strict terms of the Treaty of Versailles were announced in 1919, which ultimately led to the rise of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party.

"There would have been no great grievance or betrayal to react against, as the National Socialists would do, and Adolf Hitler would have remained a fringe figure in German politics, likely campaigning for a more hard-line victorious peace and for more annexations, but without the appeal that he would have by the 1930s."

ABOVE: **Men of the 23rd US Infantry in France, 1918. The Western Front would not have even come into existence had the Schlieffen Plan been executed successfully**

TOP RIGHT: **A poster commemorating the October Revolution of 1917. While a swift end to World War I might not have prevented a palace coup, Russia may have ended up taking a less extreme path in future years**

A DIFFERENT COLD WAR

Just as Hitler's rise would have been avoided by a successful Schlieffen Plan, a communist Russia might not have come into being. "However," cautions Professor Lloyd, "even if Russian casualties and territorial losses had been less than what it actually suffered in 1918, it's likely that some form of revolution or palace coup would have taken place. This would have reduced the power of the tsar and allowed greater forms of democratic participation in Russian life, actually weakening the forces of Bolshevism and communism and allowing Russia to evolve in a more stable and less revolutionary way.

"EUROPE WOULD NOT HAVE SUFFERED FROM THE CRIPPLING ECONOMIC DAMAGE CAUSED BY WORLD WAR I"

"Despite this, the lure of communism would likely have remained in many parts of the world, including South America and Asia. Yet, without a Soviet Union to spearhead and support these communist movements, it's more likely that establishment forces would have been able to hold on in many places, keeping communism at bay."

And what of Britain's place in a Europe redefined by the Schlieffen Plan? "The British could not have continued the war," Professor Lloyd concludes. "The government of Herbert Asquith would have likely fallen and a new ministry come into power that sought to work with Germany to forge the best path forward. There would probably have been a period of uneasy coexistence, followed by a kind of cold war until Germany's conquest was set in stone.

"The history of the 20th century would have been unrecognisable had the Schlieffen Plan succeeded." ⊙

LISTEN
Professor Nick Lloyd discusses the military innovations of the Western Front in an episode of the *HistoryExtra* podcast: historyextra.com/*ww1-innovation-pod*

NEXT MONTH
What if... Henry V had lived longer?

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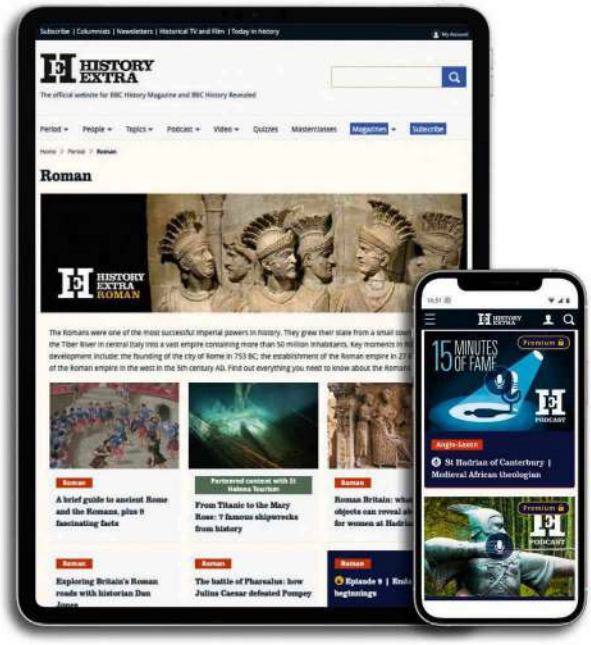

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30,000

The number of clay cuneiform tablets that made up the seventh-century BC Library of Ashurbanipal, discovered among the ruins of the ancient Assyrian city of Nineveh (now part of modern-day Iraq).

MAIN: An illustration depicting the battle of Teutoburg Forest, AD 9, in which three Roman legions were destroyed by a fearsome alliance of Germanic tribes

BELOW RIGHT: A medal bearing the profile of Valens, who died at the hands of the Goths during the battle of Adrianople in AD 378

What was the Roman empire's worst defeat?

SHORT ANSWER The imperial era was bookended by humbling routs for the mighty legions

LONG ANSWER Yes, the Roman army earned its formidable reputation for discipline and tactical supremacy, but that didn't mean it was invincible. Two defeats from the time of the empire stand out as the most humiliating: one at the beginning and the other at the end.

In AD 9, three experienced legions – around 20,000 men, or a tenth of the whole army – were wiped out in an ambush by a coalition of Germanic tribes. The battle of the Teutoburg Forest shattered the aura of the Roman army and halted conquests beyond the Rhine, causing the first emperor, Augustus, to bang his head on the wall crying "Give me back my legions!"

Then, in AD 378, the eastern emperor Valens went down hard to the Goths in the battle of Adrianople, losing around two-thirds of the Roman forces – and his own life. The defeat marked the beginning of the end for the western empire in the fifth century.

During the Republic, Rome suffered some pretty ignoble losses, too: if the accounts of the historian Livy are to be believed, the battle of Arausio in 105 BC saw 80,000 soldiers and 40,000 servants perish, while at the earlier battle of Cannae in 216 BC, the Carthaginians under Hannibal routed around 50,000 Romans.

GETTY IMAGES X2

PILLAGE PEOPLE
The Scandinavian raiders we commonly call the Vikings have only been known by that name since the 19th century

When did the meaning of 'Viking' change?

SHORT ANSWER A 19th-century poem confirmed that it referred to the raiders, not their activities

LONG ANSWER The so-called Viking Age tends to be dated from the raid on Lindisfarne, off England's northeast coast, in AD 793 to sometime between 1066 and the mid-13th century, but it was not until the 19th century that the Vikings actually became known as Vikings. No distinct group was called that – they were Norse, Danes and Swedes – and the peoples of Scandinavia did not see their forays across Europe as some kind of social or cultural movement.

The word referred more to an activity, or way of life: one of seafaring and raiding. It was much like 'pirate'. While the meaning evolved over the centuries thanks in part to interpretations of the runes and sagas left behind, it only became established as a catch-all moniker to go with the images of bearded, axe-wielding warriors in the early 19th century. Swedish writer Erik Gustaf Geijer is credited for popularising this with his poem, appropriately titled *The Viking*.

57

The number of classes at the first dog show held by Charles Cruft, in 1886. Around 600 dogs competed, and it was such a success that he held the first Crufts five years later.

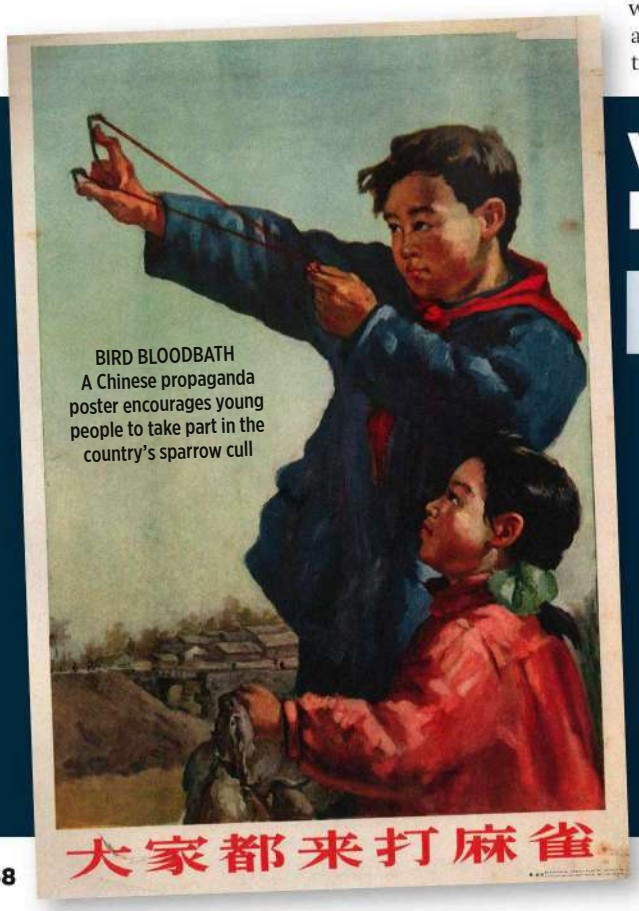
Who was awarded the Holloway Brooch?

SHORT ANSWER If the cause of Votes for Women was a war, then the brooch was a service medal

LONG ANSWER The three colours of the broad arrow on the front of the Holloway Brooch are a tell-tale sign of who it was awarded to: purple, white and green, the colours of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), better known as the suffragettes. Behind the arrow is a portcullis, a symbol of the House of Commons – there as a reminder of the main stumbling block to winning women the vote.

Designed by Sylvia Pankhurst, the purpose of the silver brooch was to honour the suffragettes imprisoned at Holloway Prison for direct action (hence the name). The so-called "Victoria Cross of the Union" was first awarded at a mass meeting at the Albert Hall in 1909, and recipients included Emily Wilding Davison, who later would die after colliding with the king's horse at the 1913 Epsom Derby.

LEADER OF A MOVEMENT
WSPU co-founder Emmeline Pankhurst personally presented some of the first brooches



BIRD BLOODBATH
A Chinese propaganda poster encourages young people to take part in the country's sparrow cull

What was the Four Pests campaign?

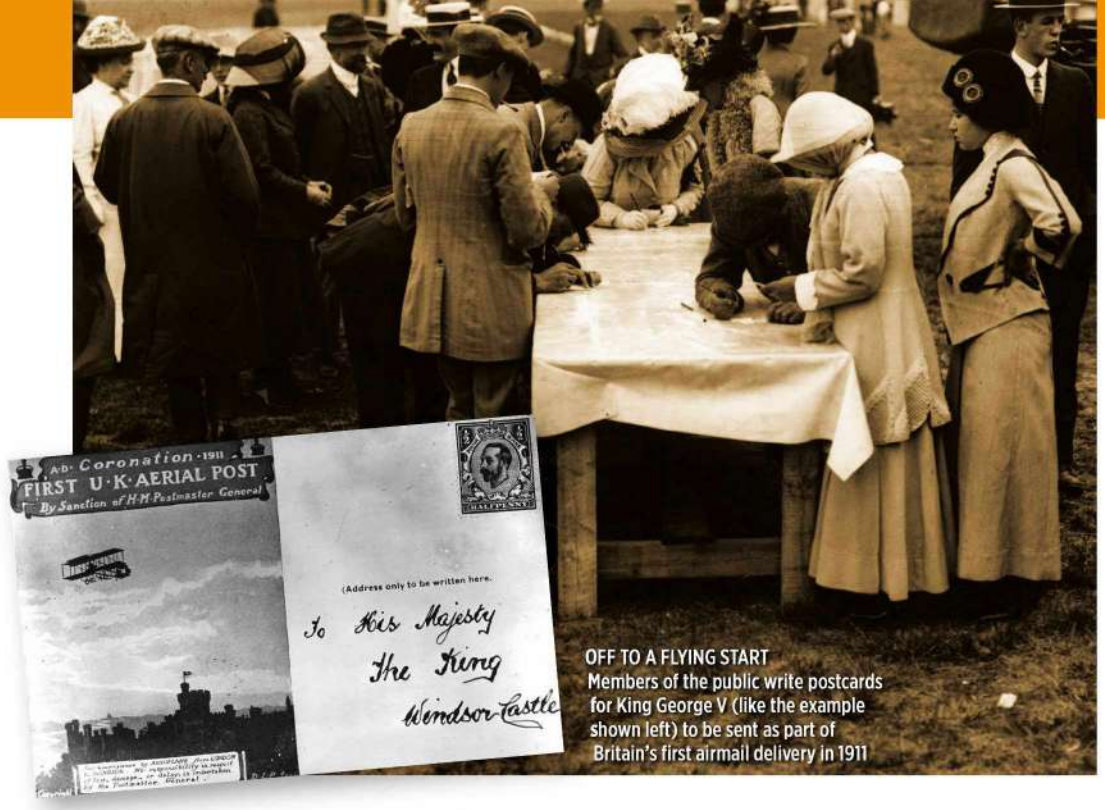
SHORT ANSWER Communist China initiated a countrywide pest control strategy. It worked, but at a severe cost

LONG ANSWER In 1958, Chairman Mao launched his economic plan, the Great Leap Forward, to modernise China and move the nation from an agrarian to an industrialised society. For this to happen, his communist regime declared the need for the country to be rid of the "four pests": rats, flies, mosquitoes and sparrows, all blamed for the spread of diseases and destruction of crops.

Mass exterminations soon got underway. Sparrows were shot, their eggs and nests were destroyed, and people banged pots and pans to stop them landing anywhere until the birds dropped dead from exhaustion.

The campaign pushed the sparrow to near-extinction in China, but it had the unintended (and foreseeable) consequence of drastically upsetting the ecological balance. With no birds to eat insects and locusts, crops failed and the Great Famine of 1959–61 worsened. In the end, the regime had to import sparrows from the Soviet Union; they also changed the fourth "pest" to bed bugs.

GETTY IMAGES X7, ALAMY X1



OFF TO A FLYING START
Members of the public write postcards for King George V (like the example shown left) to be sent as part of Britain's first airmail delivery in 1911

When was the first airmail delivered?

SHORT ANSWER Within a decade of aircraft first getting off the ground. Now *that's* an example of post-haste...

LONG ANSWER Officially, the first scheduled airmail took off in February 1911, eight years after the Wright Brothers made history with their first heavier-than-air flights. Organised by British aviator Walter Windham, the flying postal service was a showpiece for the United Provinces Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition in India. In a single 13-minute flight, French pilot Henri Pequet flew a sack of more than 6,000 cards and letters over a distance of around five to six miles in his Humber-Sommer biplane, each one bearing the stamp "First Aerial Post, U.P. Exhibition, Allahabad. 1911".

Windham took the idea back to Britain and later that year set up a temporary airmail service to celebrate the coronation of King George V, delivering commemorative cards and messages from Hendon Aerodrome, north London, to Windsor (although it was partly disrupted by poor weather).

Of course, there were examples of rudimentary airmail before aircraft, mostly involving homing pigeons. And on 7 January 1785, a hot-air balloon flown by Jean-Pierre Blanchard and John Jeffries carried a letter across the English Channel from Dover to Calais. It had been written by an American named William Franklin and addressed to his son, who was in France working in the diplomatic sector alongside his grandfather, the Founding Father Benjamin Franklin.

DID YOU KNOW?

DUMB NAME
The prestigious US university, Yale, was named after one of its first benefactors, Elihu Yale. If it had been named after another donor, it could easily have become known as Dummer College, after Jeremiah Dummer.

LUCI-FUR
In 1233, Pope Gregory IX issued an alarming papal bull describing a Satanic ritual in which cult members kissed a black cat on the buttocks. This helped connect cats with witchcraft, resulting in countless feline deaths over the centuries.

DODGING DALÍ
The Catalan artist Salvador Dalí would get out of paying restaurant bills by writing out a cheque and then doodling something on the back, knowing that no waiter would cash something with an original Dalí drawing on it.

CHANNEL HOPPER
At 3am on 17 July 1619, a man named Bernard Calvert left his home in London, rode to Dover, and boarded a ship to Calais. Once there, he came right back and was home again by 8pm, completing the first-known day trip from England to France.

Who invented Coade stone?

SHORT ANSWER Eleanor Coade concocted an artificial stone and ensured she was the only supplier

LONG ANSWER London is teeming with statues and sculptures braving the elements. Some have a better chance of survival, though, for they are made of Coade stone, an artificial ceramic stone capable of being cut in any way and essentially weatherproof. Examples are the South Bank Lion on Westminster Bridge, the Nelson Pediment at the Old Royal Naval College, and even features on Buckingham Palace.

Developed by savvy businesswoman Eleanor Coade in c1770 – although she called it Lithodipyra – its formula remained a secret for centuries. Her invention helped Coade's trade in outdoor ornaments to thrive as she picked up the patronage of the nobility, plus the appointment of King George III. Coade stone was soon seen around Britain and beyond, becoming popular among artists all over the world.

ROARSOME SIGHT
The South Bank Lion is a notable example of a Coade stone statue

Why did Mozart write 'Kiss My Arse'?

SHORT ANSWER It seems the prodigy enjoyed writing dirty ditties for his pals

LONG ANSWER Around 1782, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart wrote a new canon in B-flat major: a bouncy piece with German lyrics for six voices. It demonstrates, in a small way, his prodigious talent, but also his proclivity towards the vulgar and immature, for its title is *Leck mich him Arsch* – literally meaning 'lick me in the arse' and understood in English as 'kiss my arse'. The composer wrote it for no reason other than the amusement of his friends. Although, when the explicit composition was sent to be published after his death, there were numerous lyrical changes, with the references to bottoms switched to "let us be glad".

AERIAL ATTACK
Houses in Dublin's North Strand were reduced to rubble following a Luftwaffe raid on the city in 1941

1989

The year that Iceland lifted its nationwide ban on beer. The Nordic country had introduced a prohibition on alcohol in 1915, although wine had been legalised again by 1922.

Why was Dublin bombed in WWII?

SHORT ANSWER Poor navigation, or to teach Eire a lesson?

LONG ANSWER Despite Eire's strict neutrality in World War II, the country fell victim to the Luftwaffe around the time of the Blitz. The worst attack came on 30–31 May 1941, when bombs dropping on the North Strand area of Dublin killed at least 28 people (a quarter coming from one family alone) and damaged the presidential residence.

There are two prevailing theories why neutral land was targeted, the first being Germany's claim it was all an accident after the bombers got lost looking for Belfast. But since Dublin was hit on numerous occasions, as were other towns, that would require a long list of navigational errors. The other theory is that the Nazis were exacting revenge after Irish rescue services went north of the border to assist in the aftermath of a raid in April 1941. It was only long after the war that the West German government paid hundreds of thousands in compensation.

Does the Library of Congress have Freud's cocaine?

SHORT ANSWER No, it doesn't have Freud's cocaine. It has Freud's friend's cocaine

LONG ANSWER There is a persistent rumour that the Library of Congress in Washington DC, the largest library in the world, has possession of a small amount of cocaine that was formerly the property of Austrian psychoanalysis kingpin, Sigmund Freud. Although he certainly had a fondness for the drug – carrying out experiments to ascertain its medical applications – the rumour is not true. In fact, the stash had belonged to Freud's friend and colleague, Carl Koller.

That is just one of the many unusual things among the 170 million objects and materials in the Library's collection, including a 160-year-old slice of cake from the wedding of circus performer General Tom Thumb, the contents of Abraham Lincoln's pockets from the day he was shot, and a map of the Grand Canyon made of chocolate.

A FREUDIAN SLIP-UP?
Stories that Freud's illicit drugs stash ended up in the world's largest library (*below*) are false

Why were fig leaves used in art?

WHAT A COVER-UP!
A 20th-century statue at the Stadio dei Marmi, Rome, sports the classic fig leaf 'look' popularised hundreds of years earlier

SHORT ANSWER Inspired by Adam and Eve, the fig leaf became a symbol of lust and a tool of censorship

LONG ANSWER According to the Book of Genesis, Adam and Eve became ashamed of their nudity after eating the Forbidden Fruit, causing them to cover themselves with loincloths made of sewn-together fig leaves. In the 16th century, the Catholic Church adopted the same look: not for its priests' vestments, but for a campaign against nudity in art – a response to the revival of the Renaissance, which encouraged artists to bare all in their works.

Formalised by the Council of Trent in 1563, the 'Fig Leaf Campaign' led to works having their genitals covered or painted over, with even Michelangelo's *David* made to wear a bronze attachment over his groin (not that this stopped the artist from covering the Sistine Chapel with nudes anyway).

This attitude prevailed for a number of centuries: in 1857, Pope Pius IX ordered statues to have their genitals chiselled off in what became popularly known as the 'Great Castration'.

GETTY IMAGES X6, ALAMY X1

ATLANTIC RELIC
The barnacle-encrusted bow of RMS *Titanic*, as seen in a still from James Cameron's documentary *Ghosts of the Abyss* (2003)

VOYAGER OF THE DEEP
Robert Ballard, who led the 1985 *Titanic* expedition, is still actively engaged in marine archaeology projects today

Who discovered the Titanic?

SHORT ANSWER While Robert Ballard got the glory, the US government footed the bill

LONG ANSWER Almost immediately after RMS *Titanic* sank in the early hours of 15 April 1912, talk began of locating the wreck in the North Atlantic Ocean. The following decades saw numerous attempts, plus notions of even raising the ship, but for 73 years nothing worked. Then up stepped Robert Ballard, US oceanographer, marine geologist and deep-diving submersible pioneer.

Committing his life to ocean exploration, he had unsuccessfully tried to find *Titanic* – the "Mount Everest" of his field – in 1977. In order to secure funding for another expedition, he agreed to a US Navy mission to locate two nuclear submarines, *Thresher* and *Scorpion*, wrecked in the 1960s... as long as he could also look for the doomed liner.

Teaming up with a French research institute, he began combing the ocean floor with *Argo*, a remote-controlled vehicle with state-of-the-art sonar and cameras. Then, on 1 September 1985, they found the first signs of debris some 4,000 metres down. The discovery made headlines worldwide.

While Ballard knows he will forever be known as 'the man who found *Titanic*', it was just a highlight in an astonishing and ongoing career. He also discovered the wrecks of the German battleship *Bismarck* and the US aircraft carrier USS *Yorktown*, to name a few.

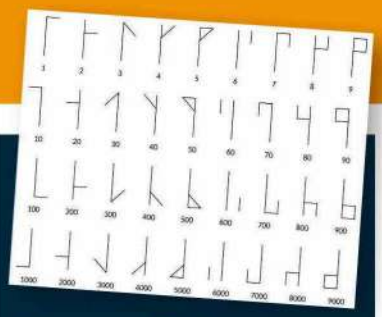
What was the Pierre Guzman Prize?

SHORT ANSWER A late-19th century challenge to prove that life was out there. Mars was 'too easy', though

LONG ANSWER Before her death in 1891, French socialite Clara Gouget left a bequest of 100,000 francs to "the person of whatever nation who will find the means... of communication with a star (planet or otherwise) and of receiving a response". The only stipulation was that the other party could not be Mars, since many people believed Martians existed and it would therefore be 'too easy'.

Although the Académie des Sciences in Paris publicly announced the prize – named after Gouget's son, Pierre Guzman – no one was able to claim it until 1969, when it was awarded to the crew of Apollo 11. It could be argued that standing on the Moon counts as communication, but they didn't receive a response... did they?

LIFE ON MARS
A 1901 illustration imagines Martians communicating with Earth – a phenomenon some people believed was possible



How did Cistercian numerals work?

SHORT ANSWER The religious order thought the Arabic system used too many glyphs, it seems

LONG ANSWER Arabic numerals were first introduced to Europe around the 13th century, replacing the Roman system that had existed for hundreds of years. But rather than adopt this new method, Cistercian monks devised their own way of writing numbers.

The most notable aspect of the system (*pictured above*) was that it allowed members to write any number between one and 9,999 using a single glyph. Each glyph started with a central line from top to bottom, before other shapes were added to represent a specific integer. An addition in the top-right quadrant meant it was a unit, with the top-left used for tens, bottom-right for hundreds and bottom-left for thousands. The monks just had to learn the marks for one to nine and draw them in the relevant quadrant to create numbers with ease.

The Cistercians used their system for dates and references, and by the 15th century it was seen as far afield as England, Sweden and Italy.

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ONE TO WATCH

The first series of *African Queens* stars Adesuwa Oni (*left*) as the 17th-century ruler Njinga, with Marilyn Nnadebe (*right*) playing her sister, Funji

The series charts Njinga's rise to power during an age marked by slavery and Portuguese colonialism

Warrior, diplomat, royal

African Queens: Njinga / Netflix, streaming now

Born into the royal family of Ndongo in c1583, Njinga Ana de Sousa Mbande is a key figure in the history of what's now Angola. An accomplished politician and military leader, she became monarch of the Ambundu kingdoms of Ndongo (1624–63) and, through conquest, Matamba (1631–63).

How did she rise to such heights? It's a story that, paradoxically, has much to do with Njinga never being expected to assume power. This meant her father, the monarch Kilombo, could lavish attention on a favourite daughter without running the risk of male heirs getting jealous. Njinga learnt how to wield a battle axe, she accompanied her father to official functions and, taught by Portuguese missionaries, she was able to read and write.

All this training was vital to Njinga when, following the death of her brother Ngola Mbandi, she assumed the throne. These were tumultuous times and she faced opposition from noble families pressing their own claims to succeed Mbandi.

During a period when the Portuguese sought increasing control of a region key to the then growing transatlantic slave trade, another urgent priority was to limit European influence. In her later years, she even used religion – she was baptised while on a diplomatic mission, hence her middle names – as a tool when she tried to get Matamba internationally recognised as a Christian kingdom.

With Jada Pinkett Smith as executive producer, *African Queens: Njinga* is a docudrama series that charts this remarkable life. Future series will introduce other extraordinary African women royals to a wider audience.

WEEKLY TV & RADIO
Visit ***historyextra.com*** for updates on upcoming TV and radio programmes

JOE ALBLAS/NETFLIX © 2023 X2

The late Susan Sontag is the subject of a five-part BBC Radio 3 series marking what would have been the writer's 90th birthday

A new documentary film lifts the lid on life at Casa Susanna, a hotel for transgender women and cross-dressing men run by Susanna Valenti (*centre*) in the 1950s and 1960s

Transamerican tale

Storyville: Casa Susanna / BBC iPlayer, streaming now

In 2005, following the discovery of a cache of negatives and prints in a Manhattan flea market, a book entitled *Casa Susanna* was published. Compiled by Robert Swope, "a gentle punk rocker turned furniture dealer", and partner Michel Hurst, it gathered together pictures from the 1960s showing cross-dressing men and transgender women enjoying life at an idyllic retreat in the Catskill Mountains, New York.

Over the next few years, former guests began to speak about their experiences of staying at the eponymous Casa Susanna, and its untold story – which would go on to inspire Harvey Fierstein's Tony-nominated play *Casa Valentina* – slowly began to emerge.

What became evident is that it was a haven for its middle-class customers at a time when cross-dressing was a criminal offence across much of the US. For the price of $25, guests could enjoy a weekend's board and lodging, with make-up lessons provided courtesy of owner Susanna Valenti and her wife Marie, who also ran a local wig shop.

One of the guests, Andrea Susan, was designated the hotel's official photographer, which was crucial given the risks of sending negatives to a professional developer who might have alerted the police. Susan captured images both of men who were heterosexual cross-dressers and those who later identified as transgender, including Valenti and the activist Virginia Prince (1912–2009), publisher of the magazine *Transvestia*.

Sébastien Lifshitz's sensitively told *Storyville* documentary, which premiered at the Venice Film Festival last year, looks back at the history of Casa Susanna and the role it played in the lives of its visitors. Much of the story is told by former guests Diane and Kate, both in their eighties when they were interviewed.

Casa Susanna was a safe haven at a time when cross-dressing was illegal in much of the US

Intellectually seeking Susan

The Essay: Susan Sontag / BBC Radio 3, Monday 6 March

American writer and activist Susan Sontag (1933–2004) was one of the most important public intellectuals of her era, a groundbreaking feminist and also a pioneer in the way she critiqued popular culture as well as high culture. But her life and work, thinks journalist Joanna Robertson, have been mythologised and even distorted since Sontag's death. What does this process tell us about contemporary society and about our own emotional lives? And is it possible to reveal the real Sontag?

Robertson, someone who was not only close to Sontag in the writer's final years but is mother to her only grandchild, is better qualified than most to answer these questions. Over successive weeknights, she marks 90 years since Sontag's birth by focusing on five key essays. Expect a mix of philosophy, history and biography.

The 1985 bombing of *Rainbow Warrior* (*main*) is the focus of a new BBC Two programme, which delves into key evidence surrounding the sinking (*right*)

COLLECTION OF CINDY SHERMAN X2, GETTY IMAGES X2, BBC X1, OXFORD SCIENTIFIC FILMS/PATRICK SMITH X1, ALAMY X2

Outsider heroes

Stephen Fry: Willem and Frieda – Defying the Nazis / Channel 4, March

Misfits can fight too. Indeed, those who find themselves off to one side of mainstream society may just be all the more keenly aware of why it's so important to stand up for your beliefs. Such is the message that underpins this new feature-length documentary about the Dutch Resistance, presented by Stephen Fry for Channel 4's *Secret History* strand.

At its centre lie two gay activists, people who were open about their sexuality, which only put them in more danger when the Nazis occupied the Netherlands: artist Willem Arondeus and cellist Frieda Belinfante. Both were part of a group that forged identity papers for Jews, helping to save people from the horrors of the Holocaust.

But when the Nazis began to check the fake papers against centrally held files, a new plan was needed. Arondeus and Belinfante were among those who, in 1943, came up with a daring plan to destroy the Amsterdam civil registry office. The plan was a partial success and as many as 800,000 identity cards were destroyed, while managing to avoid inflicting injuries or causing loss of life.

However, the Germans immediately offered a reward to anyone who identified those who had undertaken the attack, and Arondeus and 13 others were tried and sentenced to death (although two members of the group received clemency). Belinfante was luckier. Warned that the authorities were seeking her, she disguised herself as a man and lived with friends for three months. She ultimately escaped to Switzerland and, in the wake of World War II, emigrated to the US, where she built a career as a musician and conductor.

Frieda Belinfante (*left*) with her partner, Henriëtte Hilda Bosmans. Belinfante was a member of the Dutch Resistance alongside her friend Willem Arondeus (*inset*), although only one of them survived the war

Explosive event

Rainbow Warrior: Murder in the Pacific / BBC Two and BBC iPlayer, February

Between 1966 and 1996, the atoll of Moruroa in French Polynesia was a centre for nuclear weapons testing. The number of tests that took place may have been as high as 181, including 41 atmospheric tests.

Inevitably, this led to protests, notably by Greenpeace, which in July 1985 was preparing to send its flagship *Rainbow Warrior* into the South Pacific as the French prepared to undertake a test. But the ship would never set sail from its dock in Auckland, New Zealand. Instead, operatives from France's Directorate-General for External Security (DGSE) placed two limpet mines on the ship, which exploded seven minutes apart.

While the *Rainbow Warrior* was evacuated after the first detonation – presumably as the agents intended, so as to prevent loss of life – the delay was to prove fatal as photographer Fernando Pereira went to retrieve his equipment. The second blast, larger than the first, rapidly flooded the ship and he drowned.

This feature-length documentary charts the story of the botched operation, the subsequent police investigation and the international outcry that followed when it became clear this was an act of state-sponsored terrorism. As well as featuring testimony from spies, detectives, activists and politicians, the film also examines the legacy of nuclear testing by western powers.

The making of a cultural icon

Becoming Frida Kahlo / BBC Two, March

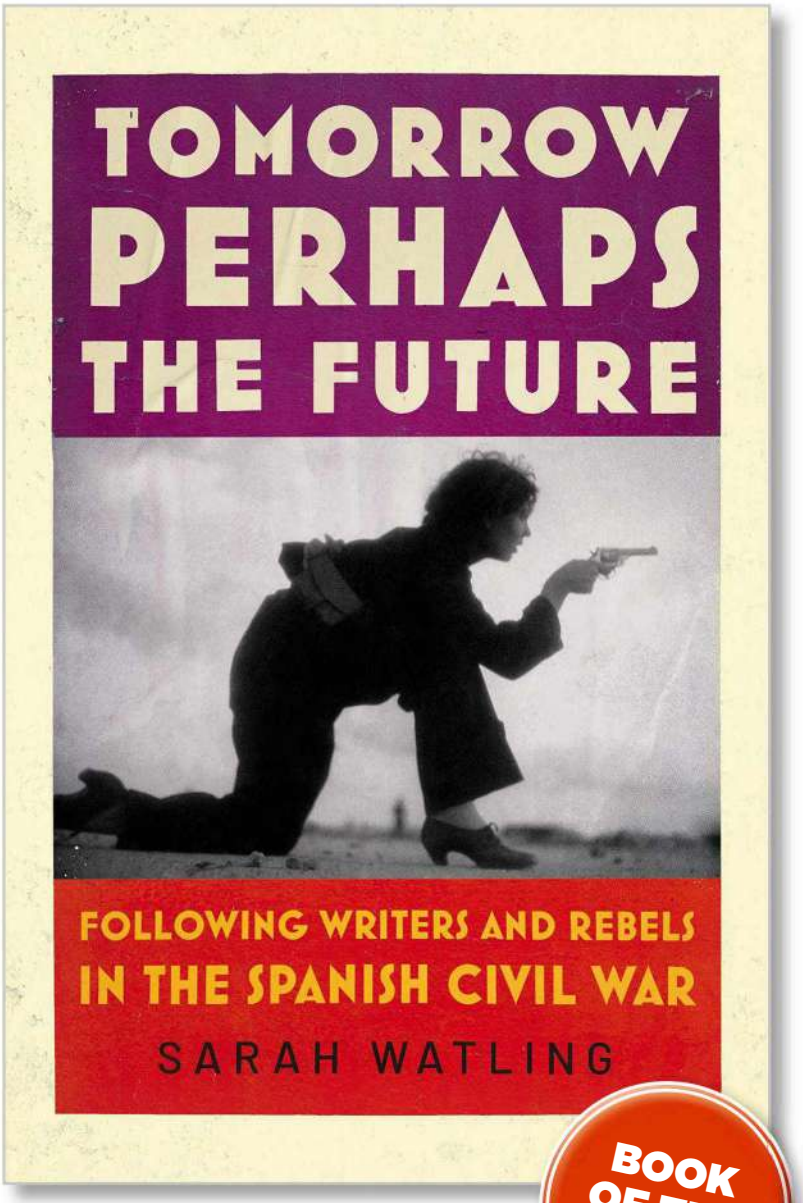
In 2021, Frida Kahlo's 1949 self-portrait *Diego and I*, shown left, went under the hammer for $34.9m (£25m). But how did the artist come to be so highly regarded that her work can fetch such astronomical prices?

This series does much to explain why Kahlo is now more famous than she was during her lifetime. Featuring interviews with experts, it charts key events in her extraordinary life. Nevertheless, it's Kahlo's art that lingers longest in the imagination as the camera lingers over key works.

▶▶ *For more on Frida Kahlo, turn to page 52.*

BOOKS & PODCASTS

THIS MONTH'S BEST HISTORICAL READS AND LISTENS



BOOK OF THE MONTH

Tomorrow Perhaps the Future: Following Writers and Rebels in the Spanish Civil War

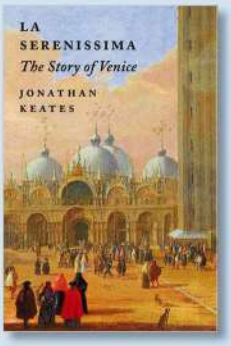
By Sarah Watling
Jonathan Cape, £22, hardback, 384 pages

Driven by what they regarded as their moral imperative to take a stand against fascism, thousands of volunteers headed to Spain as the nation plunged into civil war in 1936. This joint biography charts the contributions of some of the women who joined the cause, including writers Nancy Cunard and Sylvia Townsend Warner and aristocrat Jessica Mitford. Their stories, often overlooked, reveal how the Spanish Civil War became a defining moment – and also, in many cases, offered an escape from the restrictions of their normal lives.

La Serenissima: The Story of Venice

By Jonathan Keates
Apollo, £40, hardback, 496 pages

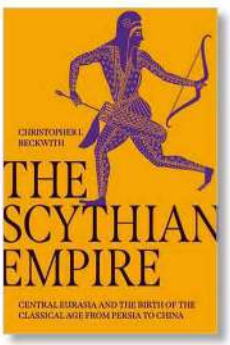
Venice is an extraordinary place, its history shaped just as much by hardheaded business and conquest as by culture and imagination. This book navigates those twin currents, chronicling how its inhabitants mastered the waves to craft a unique city whose influence endured for centuries from the Middle Ages to the 1700s. It's beautifully presented, too, studded with maps, photographs and evocative examples of the artworks that made *La Serenissima* – 'the most serene' – justly famous.

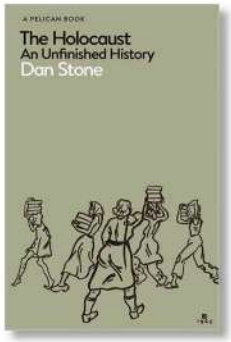


The Scythian Empire: Central Eurasia and the Birth of the Classical Age from Persia to China

By Christopher I Beckwith
Princeton University Press, £35, hardback, 416 pages

Throughout the eighth and seventh centuries BC, the ancient Scythian people of the Central Eurasian steppes carved out a vast, innovative, and hugely culturally influential empire – one whose legacy has since been largely overlooked. This illuminating account of the dynasty's contribution to global ideas, politics and even fashion aims to put that right, both highlighting its accomplishments and the ways in which its sheer scope created connections between a diverse range of cultures and peoples. Eye-opening, if occasionally academic, stuff.





The Holocaust: An Unfinished History

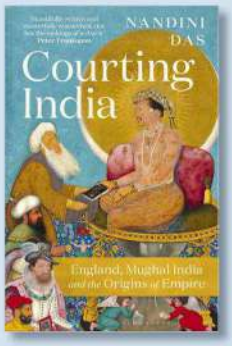
By Dan Stone
Pelican, £22, hardback, 464 pages

This masterful account of the Holocaust acts both as a concise, incisive overview of its horrors, and a corrective to some of the misconceptions that have sprung up about the subject across the past eight decades. From the sheer scope of international involvement to the ways in which its complex legacies continue to shape the modern world, Dan Stone offers a thought-provoking and often moving look at one of history's most significant and most discussed events.

Courting India: England, Mughal India and the Origins of Empire

By Nandini Das
Bloomsbury, £30, hardback, 480 pages

When we think of Britain's historical ties to India, the imperial might of the 19th century often comes to mind. Yet rewind a few hundred years and the situation was very different: an uncertain England, making tentative steps into a region dominated by the Mughal empire. King James VI and I's first ambassador to that empire, Thomas Roe, was given the task of making one such foray during the 1610s, and his experiences – expertly charted here by Nandini Das – reveal much about a crucial turning point in colonial history.



FICTION

Fire Rush

By Jacqueline Crooks
Jonathan Cape, £16.99, hardback, 352 pages

Jacqueline Crooks' novel is at once a paean to the power of music and a skilful evocation of Britain's political tensions during the late 1970s and 80s. It tells the story of Yamaye, a young woman whose life centres around friends, the weekend, and the dancehall. When a new relationship takes her life in an unexpected direction, Yamaye finds herself caught up in a wave of riots engulfing the country – and a journey to Jamaica, where the past has the potential to reshape the present.

PODCAST WHAT TO LISTEN TO...

Each month we bring you three of our favourite podcasts from the BBC and HistoryExtra

The Rest is History: Lady Jane Grey

bit.ly/GreyPod118

Spanning just nine days in July 1553, Lady Jane Grey's reign has the dubious honour of being the shortest of any British monarch. But should we even regard her as a queen? That's one of the questions considered by Dominic Sandbrook and Tom Holland in this episode of their podcast, as they delve into Grey's turbulent time on the throne.

An audacious kidnapping in 1970s Paris

bit.ly/ParisPod118

On 23 January 1978, the industrialist Baron Édouard-Jean Empain was snatched from the streets of Paris, triggering a chain of events that would end in a bloody shootout and the downfall of one of France's largest companies. In this new instalment of the *HistoryExtra* podcast, author Tom Sancton uncovers the real story behind the kidnapping.

In Our Time: Rawls' Theory of Justice

bit.ly/RawlsPod118

In this new episode of *In Our Time*, Melvyn Bragg and guests discuss the US philosopher John Rawls (*pictured*), whose experiences of World War II led him to set out a vision for a society defined by individual freedom and support for its most disadvantaged members. If you're in the mood for some bracing intellectual history, this might hit the spot.

GETTY IMAGES X1

EVENTS & EXHIBITIONS

WHAT TO SEE AND WHERE TO VISIT IN THE WIDER WORLD OF HISTORY

MUST SEE

EXHIBITION

Portraits of Dogs: From Gainsborough to Hockney

It has often been said that Britain is a nation of dog lovers. Indeed, the pooch has been a dogged presence on British canvases since the 17th century. In this charming new exhibition, the Wallace Collection invites visitors to contemplate the roles our canine companions have played as artistic muses, showcasing everything from paintings of royal pets, such as Queen Victoria's pack (*main*), to a portrait depicting one of David Hockney's beloved dachshunds (*top right*). With sculpture and even taxidermy on show too, it promises to be a vivid exploration of the enduring relationship between humanity and one of its oldest friends.

PAID ENTRY Wallace Collection, London, opens on 29 March, *wallacecollection.org*

ROYAL COLLECTION TRUST © HIS MAJESTY KING CHARLES III X1, ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS X2, RICHARD SCHMIDT COLLECTION/THE DAVID HOCKNEY FOUNDATION X1

BELOW LEFT: **An ornate 17th-century portable writing desk from Pasto, Colombia**

BELOW RIGHT: **Goya's striking portrait of the Duchess of Alba is one of the exhibition's star attractions**

EVENT

Blood and Guts: The Twists and Turns of Edinburgh's Medical History

This walking tour will examine Edinburgh's role as a centre of medical innovation, highlighting sites connected to pioneering physicians of the past. It will also tell the gruesome story of 19th-century serial killers Burke and Hare, whose exploits shocked Scotland.

PAID ENTRY Starts at Surgeons' Hall Museums, Edinburgh, 10am–11.15am, 25 March, *museum.rcsed.ac.uk*

FESTIVAL

IWM History Festival

Imperial War Museums' first-ever history festival promises not to disappoint. As well as displays of rarely seen objects, a programme of talks hosted by experts and eyewitnesses to conflict will enable visitors to learn about subjects as diverse as the Spitfire, the Indian army during the world wars, and refugees from the Holocaust.

PAID ENTRY IWM Duxford, Cambridgeshire, 25–26 March, *iwm.org.uk/whats-on*

EXHIBITION

Spain and the Hispanic World

Bringing together more than 150 objects from the Hispanic Society Museum & Library in New York City, this exhibition tells the global story of Spanish culture, with highlights including paintings by El Greco, Velázquez and Goya, plus a vast array of ceramics, textiles and manuscripts.

PAID ENTRY Royal Academy of Arts, London, until 10 April, *royalacademy.org.uk/exhibition/spain-hispanic-world*

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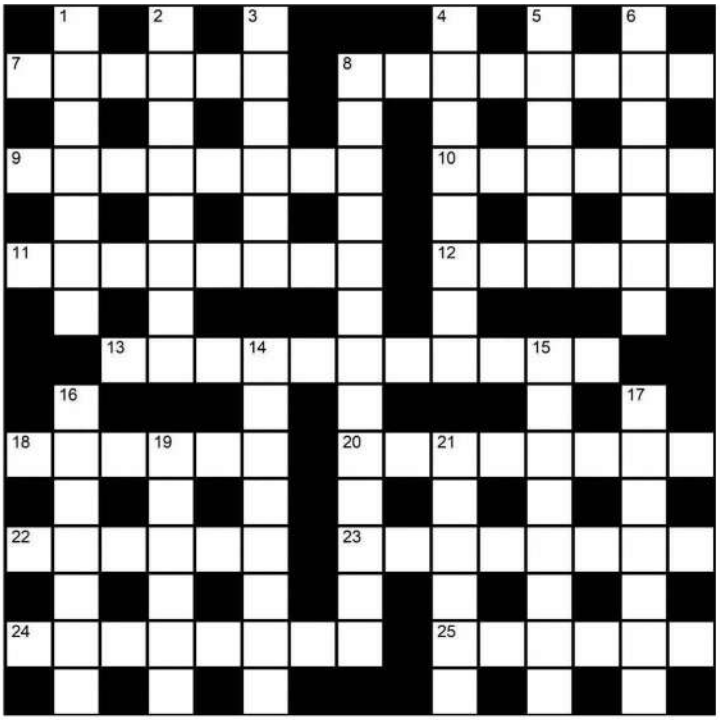
ACROSS

7 Friedrich ___ (1820–95), co-author of *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) (6)
8 Mighty hero of Greek myth (8)
9 Raymond ___ (1888–1959), creator of the private eye Philip Marlowe (8)
10 Ethnic group of Kenya (6)
11 Henri ___ (1844–1910), French post-Impressionist painter (8)
12 The Big Bang, or evolution by natural selection, perhaps (6)
13 1916 film by DW Griffith (11)
18 One of four Hanoverian kings, 1714–1830 (6)
20 *The* ___, Sunday newspaper founded in 1791 (8)
22 Historical region of south Asia (6)
23 1966 Beatles album (8)
24 "I am a free man, an American, a United States Senator, and a ___, in that order" – Lyndon B Johnson, 1958 (8)
25 Group of deities in Egyptian mythology (6)

DOWN

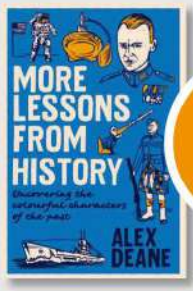
1 Ancient city of South Korea (7)
2 Alfred, Lord ___ (1809–92), English poet (8)
3 Lover of Tristan, in legend (6)
4 Volcano noted for a major eruption in 1883 (8)
5 Illinois village, scene of a 1977 dispute over a neo-Nazi march (6)
6 US state admitted to the Union on 26 July 1788 (3,4)
8 Belgian detective created by Agatha Christie (7,6)



Set by Richard Smyth

14 Sir Thomas ___ (1581–1613), poet murdered in the Tower of London (8)
15 ___ of Ansbach (1683–1737), queen consort of George II (8)
16 Mass for the dead (7)
17 Country of west Africa, independent since 1960 (7)
19 Former princely state of India; city of Gujarat (6)
21 Treaty of ___, 1920 agreement between the Allied powers and the Ottoman empire (6)

CHANCE TO WIN



BOOK WORTH £12.99 FOR THREE WINNERS

More Lessons from History
by Alex Deane

HOW TO ENTER

Post entries to **BBC History Revealed, March 2023 Crossword, PO Box 501, Leicester, LE94 0AA** or email them to **march2023@historyrevealedcomps.co.uk** by noon on **1 April 2023**.

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SOLUTION Nº 116

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LETTERS

Stephanie Suh enjoyed reading our recent article on Florence Nightingale (*main*) and Mary Seacole (*right*). Rather than treating the women as rivals, Stephanie believes they should be remembered as "partners in care"

WHAT IF...
ALFRED HAD LOST THE BATTLE OF EDINGTON?
Professor Ryan Lavelle and Nige Tassell consider the future shape and make-up of England had the king of Wessex lost a crucial battle to the Vikings in 878
DID YOU KNOW?
IN CONTEXT
"THE CORE PURPOSE OF HUMAN INTERACTION AND SOCIETY WOULD HAVE SURVIVED. EVEN BETWEEN DANE AND SAXON"

Reading our article on King Alfred's victory at the battle of Edington brought back fond memories of high school history lessons for Joan Wickham Sugg

SAINTLY WOMEN

Your recent article about Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole (January 2023) was refreshingly informative, giving a helpful insight into the lives of two remarkable women who each contributed their talents to the art of nursing in different ways.

Indeed, the women should not be considered rivals, but as partners in care. Nightingale was a skilful administrator who organised the methods of attending to the wounded, reminiscent of Saint Teresa of Ávila, who reconstructed female monasticism by founding the Discalced Carmelites. On the other hand, Seacole was like Saint Thérèse of Lisieux – known for her "little way" – by attending to the wounded with compassion after they had experienced so much carnage on the battlefield.

Treating the women as rivals and making comparisons in order to establish who deserves the accolade of 'Angel of the Crimean War' is no use. Both Nightingale and Seacole practised what they felt would help those in need. They were strong-willed women imbued with a love of humanity, in their own fashion.

Stephanie Suh
California, US

CORRECTION

• In the expert Q&A section of our Essential Guide to the Restoration (Christmas 2022), we stated that Charles II was crowned king of Scotland on 6 February 1649. He was, in fact, *proclaimed* king of that country on that date. His coronation as king of Scotland took place on 1 January 1651.

HIGH SCHOOL MEMORIES

Your recent piece on the battle of Edington (December 2022) made me recall an incident from my youth. In my senior year of high school (1964–65) I was fortunate to have Dr Mabel Margaret Morrison for English history. Her first lecture started, "The most important events in all of British history were the invasions of the Angles and Saxons in the 400s, the Danes in the 800s, and dear old William the Conqueror in 1066. Ladies, we DO know to whom I am referring, don't we? The second most important event was the battle of Edington in 878, which kept the future England from becoming Daneland." On my first visit to Britain in 1976 I made a point of visiting Winchester because of King Alfred. Thank you for a delightful article and a wonderful magazine.

Joan Wickham Sugg
North Carolina, US

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NEXT ISSUE

••• ON SALE 16 MARCH •••

THE INCA EMPIRE

Explore the dramatic highs and lows of the Inca civilisation – from life in the mountaintop city of Machu Picchu to the Spanish Conquest of 1572

PLUS... IN PICTURES: PHOTO HOAXES FROM HISTORY
THE MYSTERIOUS LIFE OF 'PRINCESS CARABOO' **SPOTLIGHT ON AVIATOR BESSIE COLEMAN** INSIDE THE DRAMATIC SINKING OF USS *INDIANAPOLIS* **WHAT IF... HENRY V HAD LIVED LONGER?** AND MUCH MORE...

CROSSWORD WINNERS

The three lucky winners of the prize crossword in issue 115 are as follows:

S Brown, Renfrewshire
A Hudson, Cumbria
J Sclanders, Lincolnshire

Congratulations! You've each won a copy of *The BBC Puzzle Book*, by Ian Smith and Gareth Moore.

We will post your prizes out as soon as possible.

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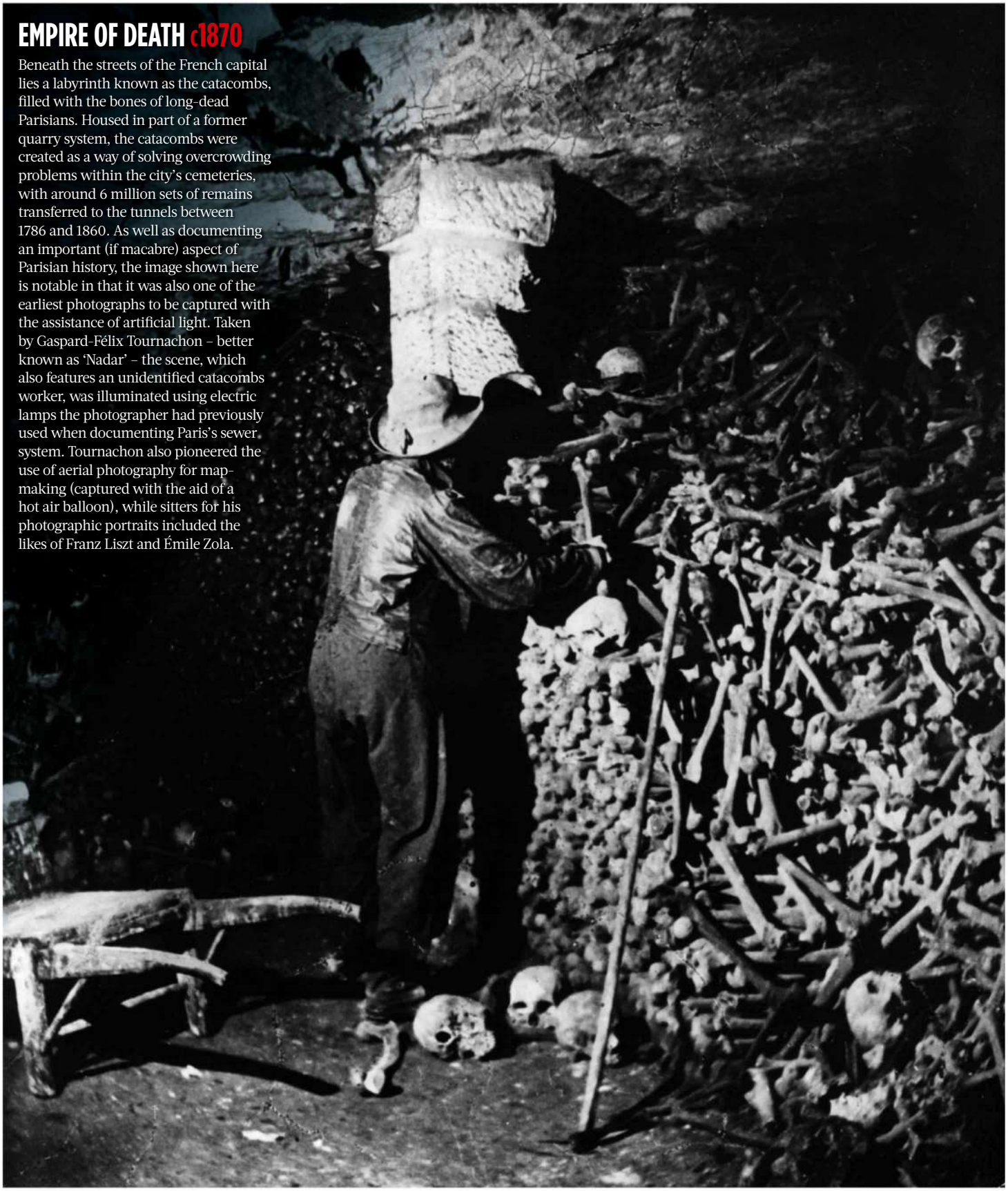
PHOTO FINISH

ARRESTING IMAGES FROM THE ANNALS OF THE PAST

EMPIRE OF DEATH c1870

Beneath the streets of the French capital lies a labyrinth known as the catacombs, filled with the bones of long-dead Parisians. Housed in part of a former quarry system, the catacombs were created as a way of solving overcrowding problems within the city's cemeteries, with around 6 million sets of remains transferred to the tunnels between 1786 and 1860. As well as documenting an important (if macabre) aspect of Parisian history, the image shown here is notable in that it was also one of the earliest photographs to be captured with the assistance of artificial light. Taken by Gaspard-Félix Tournachon – better known as 'Nadar' – the scene, which also features an unidentified catacombs worker, was illuminated using electric lamps the photographer had previously used when documenting Paris's sewer system. Tournachon also pioneered the use of aerial photography for map-making (captured with the aid of a hot air balloon), while sitters for his photographic portraits included the likes of Franz Liszt and Émile Zola.



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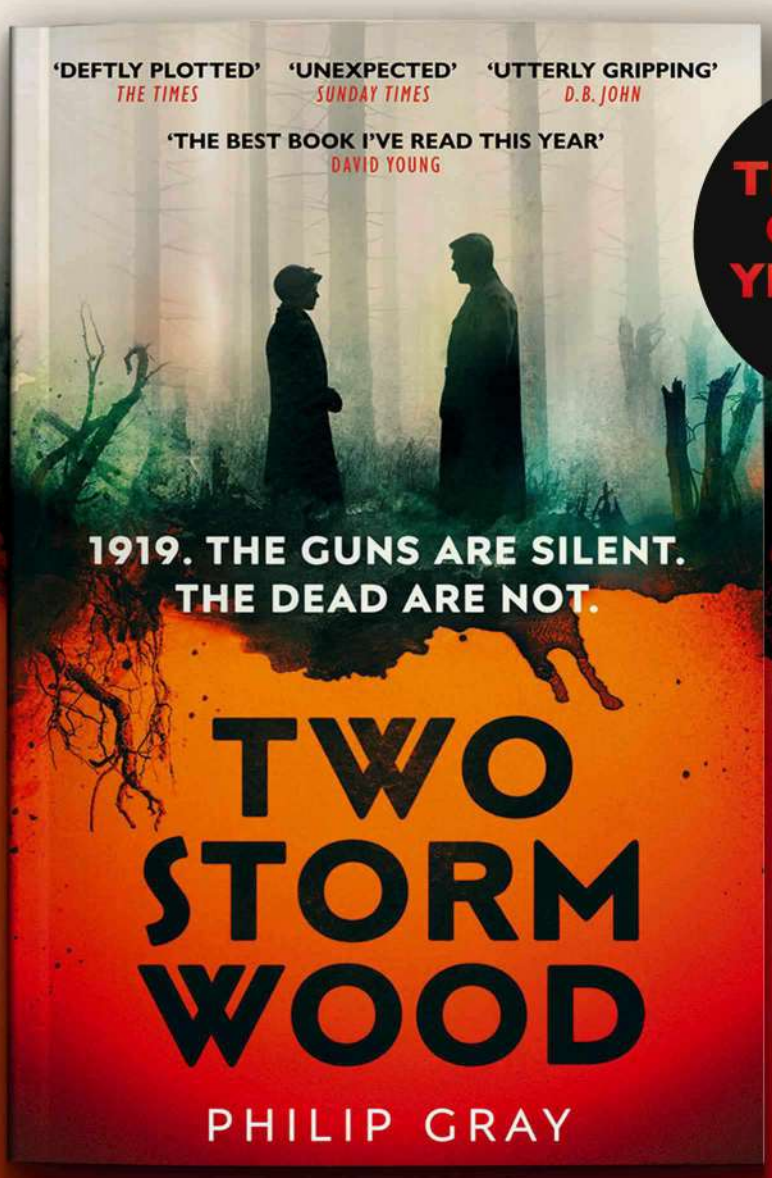
‘A worthy successor to Sebastian Faulks’ *Birdsong*’

DAVID YOUNG, AUTHOR OF *STASI CHILD*



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